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THUNDERBOLT

The
HISTORY
of the
ELEVENTH
ARMORED
DIVISION



THUNDERBOLT

Written and Edited

By

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Lieutenant Colonel, Infantry Reserve

Special Chapters

by

BRIGADIER GENERAL CHARLES S. KILBURN

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FOREWORD

As an account of the 11th Armored Division's activities in World War II, this book has been prepared in an effort to provide a permanent record for all members of the Division, their families and friends.

The book has been written from official records that were maintained by the Division throughout the war. An effort has been made to see that every organic and attached unit of the Division gets proper credit in its pages. By presenting facts in this history the reader is left to draw his own conclusions as to the danger, hardships, and valor that prevailed throughout the Division during its combat days. No attempt has been made by the author to evaluate or analysis the Division's actions. It was felt that opinion had no place in a book of this type.

Photographs that illustrate the book came from the U. S. Army Signal Corps and members of the Division. Each photograph was selected with a view toward showing action and representing each important phase of the Division's activities. It was not possible to identify accurately all the photographs in the book.

Accuracy in the spelling of cities and towns in Europe cannot be guaranteed. They were found to be spelled many different ways in reports and on maps.

HAL D. STEWARD

Washington, D. C.

April, 1948.

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574
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Without the help of many former members of the 11th Armored Division the writing of this history would have been an impossible assignment. The author wishes to express his appreciation to the following persons for their invaluable assistance.

Brigadier General Willard A. Holbrook, Jr., former CC A Commanding General, deserves most credit for making the publication of this book possible. He was responsible for making arrangements to have the history written and published. General Holbrook devoted many hours of his time to selecting photographs, writing letters, and being of great assistance generally.

Major Harry V. Douglas, who was kind enough to loan the author many important Division records.

Brigadier General Charles S. Kilburn, who was kind enough to write a special chapter on the Division's stateside activities.

Colonel Hill Blalock, who wrote the special chapter covering the Division's history from the end of the war to inactivation.

Clemens A. Werner, who furnished the G-2 After-Action Report maps that are found throughout the book.

And, Ernest Perlmutter, an ex-Division officer, whose company printed the history. He did much more than was expected to help see this book through to completion.

It is to the memory of those brave soldiers of the 11th Armored Division who gave their lives in battle that this history is dedicated. Let everyone who turns the pages of this book remember their deeds, their names, and that each of them gave his country his greatest possession — his life.

ROLL OF HONOR

1. This roster contains the names of individuals who were assigned to organizational elements of the Division at the time of casualty including those who may have been in the following duty status:

a. Individuals on detached service with other organizations or in an absentee status who became casualties while in such status.

b. Individuals assigned to an organizational element of this Division and who became casualties while their organization was attached to other army elements.

2. This roster does not contain the names of individuals who became casualties while assigned to an organization that was attached to the Division.

3. The type of casualty is as follows:

DOI—Died of Battle Injuries,

DOW—Died of Wounds.

FOD—Finding of Death.

KIA—Killed in Action.

4. Sequence of this roster is alphabetic within the following organizations:

11th Armored Military Police Platoon.

133rd Ordnance Maintenance Battalion.

151st Armored Signal Company.

21st Armored Infantry Battalion.

55th Armored Infantry Battalion.

63rd Armored Infantry Battalion.

Headquarters, 11th Armored Division Artillery.

11th Armored Command A.

490th Armored Field Artillery Battalion.

491st Armored Field Artillery Battalion.

492nd Armored Field Artillery Battalion.

41st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron Mechanized.

56th Armored Engineer Battalion.

81st Armored Medical Battalion.

22nd Armored Tank Battalion.

41st Armored Tank Battalion.

42nd Armored Tank Battalion.



BATTLE DEATHS OF THE 11TH ARMORED DIVISION BY ORGANIZATION

11TH ARMORED MILITARY POLICE PLATOON

	GRADE	TYPE OF DEATH
Lane, Willie	Private First Class	KIA

133RD ORDNANCE MAINTENANCE BATTALION

Gaworski, Adolph	Technician Fifth Grade	DOW
Maurer, Herman A.	Technician Fourth Grade	KIA
Nelson, Obert A.	Technical Sergeant	DOW
Pfuehler, Wilbert C.	Technician Fifth Grade	KIA

151ST ARMORED SIGNAL COMPANY

Packer, Robert G.	Private	KIA
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21ST ARMORED INFANTRY BATTALION

Adkins, Wallace G., Jr.	Private First Class	KIA
Allen, John C.	Private First Class	KIA
Allinson, Eli	Private	KIA
Amirault, Edwin F.	Private First Class	KIA
Bailey, Ansel D.	Private	KIA
Baker, Herbert	Private First Class	DOW
Baker, Louis A.	Private First Class	KIA
Band, Frank J., Jr.	Private First Class	DOW
Barnett, Virgil I.	Private	KIA
Bauder, Karl W., Jr.	Staff Sergeant	KIA
Beless, Harold E.	Private First Class	KIA
Bishop, James M.	Private First Class	DOW
Blake, Harry M.	Technician Fifth Grade	DOW
Bole, Frank H.	Private First Class	KIA
Brennan, John T.	Staff Sergeant	KIA
Brouwer, Francis J.	Staff Sergeant	KIA
Brown, Lewis	Sergeant	DOW
Bruce, Carl M.	Private First Class	KIA
Brust, Kenneth R.	Private First Class	DOW
Burris, Russell L.	Staff Sergeant	KIA
Butler, John H.	Private First Class	DOW
Carter, Ira E., Jr.	Private First Class	KIA
Cauble, Lester F.	Private	KIA
Chernansky, Michael	Sergeant	KIA
Christian, Lemuel E.	Technician Fifth Grade	KIA
Clark, John O.	Technical Sergeant	KIA
Cocks, Edwin A.	Private First Class	KIA
Contreras, Ventura P.	Private	KIA
Copenhaver, Paul C.	Private First Class	KIA
Cozad, George O.	Private	DOW
Crider, Thomas P.	Private First Class	DOW
Cust, James O.	Private First Class	KIA
Dalton, Warren G. H.	Captain	DOW

	GRADE	TYPE OF DEATH
Daniel, Stephen F.	Private First Class	KIA
Davidson, James H.	Private	KIA
De Modena, Ralph	Sergeant	KIA
Dee, William C., Jr.	First Lieutenant	KIA
Dees, Wilburn E.	Private First Class	KIA
Dieringer, Thomas G.	Technician Third Grade	DOW
Dobson, Amos R., Jr.	Sergeant	KIA
Duke, Lyman B.	Private First Class	DOW
East, Wayne H.	Private First Class	KIA
Elliott, Jack R.	Private First Class	KIA
Emmerling, Albert F.	Private First Class	KIA
Fishmeister, Roy W.	Private	DOW
Fordyce, Robert A.	Private First Class	KIA
Fraley, Edwin J.	Sergeant	KIA
Freyling, Harvey A. W.	Private First Class	DOW
Gardner, Lawrence E.	Technician Fifth Grade	KIA
Gentile, Paul L.	Private First Class	KIA
Crossen, Louis A.	Private First Class	KIA
Harris, Frank W.	Private	KIA
Hewitt, Benjamin H.	Private First Class	DOW
Holcomb, Raymond	Private First Class	DOW
Hora, Robert A.	Private First Class	KIA
Huddlestun, F. J.	Private First Class	KIA
Jones, Wilbur F.	First Lieutenant	KIA
Jones, Willis A.	Private First Class	DOW
Karkula, Adolph V.	First Lieutenant	KIA
Kerkstra, Benjamin	Private First Class	DOW
Kershaw, Louis A.	Private First Class	KIA
Kidney, William D., Jr.	Private First Class	KIA
Kucer, John	Private First Class	DOW
La Rosa, Julius	Private First Class	KIA
Lang, James M.	Private First Class	KIA
Lantz, David	Private	KIA
Lujan, Felix O.	Private First Class	KIA
Lym, Rudolph	Private First Class	KIA
Manning, Albert R.	Private First Class	KIA
Mattozzi, Anthony	Private	KIA
Mazzarella, Nicholas	Private First Class	KIA
McDaniel, Robert	Sergeant	KIA
McDonald, Fred	Private	KIA
McGriff, James C.	Sergeant	KIA
Merves, Joshua	Private First Class	KIA
Moore, Werner W., Jr.	Corporal	KIA
Mowinkel, Harold W.	Private First Class	DOW
Mulvaney, Vincent J.	Second Lieutenant	KIA
Nicklas, Richard G.	Private First Class	DOW
Norman, George W.	Sergeant	KIA
Novey, Albert C.	Private First Class	KIA

Okert, Paul D.	Private First Class	KIA
Olcavage, Edward J.	Private	KIA
Palko, John M., Jr.	Private First Class	KIA
Pardue, Mack C., Jr.	Private First Class	KIA
Peigowski, Steve	Private	KIA
Petersen, Carl E.	Staff Sergeant	KIA
Phillips, Arthur C.	Private First Class	KIA
Presgraves, Frank	Private First Class	KIA
Ramsey, Otha	Private	KIA
Raphael, Vincent R.	Private First Class	KIA
Ravicher, Dave	Private	KIA
Reed, Hubert D.	Sergeant	KIA
Rignola, Thomas	Sergeant	KIA
Riley, Everett J.	Private First Class	KIA
Rosinsky, Raymond J.	Technical Sergeant	KIA
Rusch, George E.	Staff Sergeant	KIA
Schneiweiss, Murry	Private	KIA
Schultz, Vernon W.	Staff Sergeant	KIA
Setchell, Lewis R.	Corporal	KIA
Shirey, Bryant T.	Second Lieutenant	KIA
Simmers, Oliver A.	Private First Class	KIA
Smith, Carroll L.	First Sergeant	KIA
Smith, Henry	Staff Sergeant	KIA
Smolak, Stanley	Private	DOW
Stanchina, Arthur L.	Staff Sergeant	KIA
Stasczyk, Henry C.	Private First Class	KIA
Steidtmann, Ernest F.	Technician Fifth Grade	DOW
Steiger, Carl H.	Private First Class	KIA
Stephens, Harold P.	Private	DOW
Stout, Roy E.	Private First Class	KIA
Strange, Roy T.	Private First Class	KIA
Strickland, Grady N.	Private First Class	KIA
Strong, Haro'd	Private First Class	DOW
Swenson, Ralph	Staff Sergeant	KIA
Thomas, Robert C.	Private First Class	KIA
Tremblay, Leonard	Private First Class	KIA
Ulrich, Monroe D.	Private	DOW
Veal, Harold M.	Private First Class	KIA
Waller, George R.	Private First Class	KIA
Walsh, James J., Jr.	Staff Sergeant	KIA
Welling, Leo W.	Technician Fifth Grade	KIA
White, Earl J.	Private	KIA
Wilke, Edmund P., Jr.	Private First Class	KIA
Willard, Hoyt T.	Private First Class	KIA
Woodward, Donald S.	Staff Sergeant	KIA
Wright, Arthur L., Jr.	Private First Class	KIA
Yates, Leslie L.	Private First Class	KIA
Yost, Robert G.	Private First Class	KIA
Yusin, Irving	Private	KIA
Zimmer, William H.	Corporal	KIA

55TH ARMORED INFANTRY BATTALION

	GRADE	TYPE OF DEATH
Adkins, Steve	Staff Sergeant	KIA
Allison, Lewis W.	Private First Class	KIA
Baboff, Mathews	Private First Class	KIA
Bacowsky, Leon	Private	KIA
Bakely, Edwin W.	Staff Sergeant	KIA
Banka, Andrew T.	Sergeant	KIA
Barbarita, Robert J.	Private First Class	KIA
Baron, Stanley N.	Private	KIA
Bauer, Donald H.	Private	KIA
Beauchamp, Emile J.	Private First Class	KIA
Been, Eugene W.	Second Lieutenant	KIA
Beverly, John F.	Private	KIA
Biglin, William J.	Private First Class	KIA
Blackburn, Roland V.	Private First Class	KIA
Bolinger, Ora R.	Private First Class	KIA
Bolton, Patrick J.	Private First Class	KIA
Box, Robert E.	Private First Class	KIA
Brockman, Paul B.	Private	KIA
Bruce, Orbie L.	Private	KIA
Burns, Wesley E.	Technical Sergeant	KIA
Burrier, Edward R.	Private	KIA
Carney, William J., Jr.	Private First Class	KIA
Cashman, Elwood G.	Staff Sergeant	DOW
Chamberlain, John W.	Technician Fifth Grade	KIA
Chernoff, Alvin S.	Private First Class	DOW
Colorito, James V.	Technician Fifth Grade	KIA
Cook, Albert B., Jr.	Private First Class	KIA
Coslite, Milton G.	Staff Sergeant	KIA
Credille, Lelon C.	Private	KIA
Daubenspeck, Marion H.	Staff Sergeant	KIA
Day, John B.	Staff Sergeant	KIA
Degruise, Sidney P.	Staff Sergeant	KIA
Del Campo, Vincent	Private	KIA
Dicicco, Alphonse P.	Private	KIA
Dingman, Harold F.	Private	KIA
Dorsey, Melvin L.	First Sergeant	KIA
Dugger, Joseph F.	Private First Class	KIA
Dunn, Wilburt J.	Second Lieutenant	KIA
Fagan, Philip J.	First Lieutenant	KIA
Fortescue, Herbert M.	Sergeant	KIA
Forziati, Emanuel A.	Private	DOW
Frey, Gordon B.	Private First Class	KIA
Galbraith, Henry	Private First Class	DOW
Gallatig, Joseph J.	Staff Sergeant	KIA
Gamble, Warren A.	Private First Class	KIA
Gissingner, Alfred A.	Private First Class	KIA

	GRADE	TYPE OF DEATH
Greer, William A.	Corporal	KIA
Grove, Lewis F.	Private First Class	KIA
Gurst, Enouch E.	Technical Sergeant	KIA
Gwin, Arthur E.	Private	KIA
Hastings, John B.	Private	KIA
Hill, Charles H.	Private	KIA
Hockman, Wilbur A.	Private First Class	KIA
Inman, Jack	Staff Sergeant	KIA
Jarvis, Arthur W.	Private First Class	KIA
Kalinsky, Isadore	Private First Class	KIA
Kardela, John F.	Private First Class	KIA
Karpowski, Henry T.	Technician Fourth Grade	KIA
Kaufman, Monte W.	Private	DOW
Keseling, Herman G., Jr.	Private First Class	KIA
Koenigsberger, John R.	Private	KIA
Krajenka, Ralph J.	Private First Class	KIA
Kruchten, Ernest S.	Second Lieutenant	KIA
Krukowski, Leo	Private	KIA
Lee, John R.	Private First Class	KIA
Leonard, Andrew	Private	KIA
Maley, John A.	Private	KIA
Malone, John R.	Private	KIA
Manfredi, Peter A.	Private	KIA
Mascenik, Frank T.	Private First Class	KIA
Massa, Dominick, Jr.	Private First Class	KIA
Mavis, Ralph H.	Private First Class	KIA
McDonald W. B., Jr.	Private First Class	KIA
McDuff, Joe, Jr.	Sergeant	KIA
McGinty, William D.	Sergeant	KIA
McGlade, James	Private First Class	KIA
McGuire, William D.	Private First Class	KIA
McVicker, Kenneth W.	Private First Class	DOW
Millard, Charles H.	Staff Sergeant	KIA
Monahan, James J.	Corporal	KIA
Morgan, Duey	Staff Sergeant	KIA
Morroch, Metro	Private	KIA
Mott, Delno H.	Private	DOW
Murphy, Patrick F.	Second Lieutenant	KIA
Newton, Ebbe H.	Private First Class	KIA
Oakes, James M.	Private	KIA
Ontiveroz, Gustavo R.	Corporal	KIA
Osborne, Lee J.	Staff Sergeant	KIA
Pepe, Arnold J.	Sergeant	KIA
Peterson, John W.	Private	KIA
Phillips, John E.	Private First Class	KIA
Pohl, Julius A.	Private	KIA
Pope, Henry G., Jr.	Private First Class	KIA
Powell, Robert E.	Private	DOW

Rakus, Leonard R.	Private	KIA
Rich, John L.	Private First Class	DOW
Robertson, Roy D.	Private First Class	KIA
Rodriguez, Manuel	Private First Class	KIA
Sandoe, Raymond H.	Private	KIA
Sauve, Gordon B.	Private First Class	KIA
Sayles, Lloyd W.	Private First Class	KIA
Senn, Harmon	Private First Class	KIA
Shirk, Palmer G.	Private	KIA
Shoenig, Harry, Jr.	Private	KIA
Silverstein, Hyman	Technical Sergeant	DOW
Snyder, Jack	Corporal	KIA
Startzel, Amon L.	Private	DOW
Steele, Virgis M.	Staff Sergeant	KIA
Stoner, Everett L.	Staff Sergeant	KIA
Szymanski, Emil V.	Private	KIA
Talesnick, Joseph	Sergeant	KIA
Tidik, John M., Jr.	Private	KIA
Tullis, Charles E.	Private	KIA
Valencia, Regino S.	Private First Class	KIA
Vanier, Francis W.	Private	DOW
West, John H.	Private	DOW
Wiech, Theodore K.	Private	KIA
Workman, Clarence B.	Sergeant	KIA
Wright, Kenneth R., Jr.	Private	KIA
Zoppi, Walter A., Jr.	Private First Class	KIA

63RD ARMORED INFANTRY BATTALION

	GRADE	TYPE OF DEATH
Allen, George L.	Private First Class	DOW
Austin, George A., Jr.	Sergeant	DOW
Bailey, David B.	Private	KIA
Baldwin, Frank H.	Private	KIA
Basham, Russell H.	Staff Sergeant	KIA
Blackman, Robert E.	Private First Class	KIA
Bond, John E.	Staff Sergeant	KIA
Branch, Robert W.	Private First Class	DOW
Brickell, John J.	Private First Class	KIA
Brooks, Sandford M.	Private First Class	KIA
Brown, Lee F.	Private First Class	KIA
Calvin, Lavoid J.	Staff Sergeant	KIA
Cantrell, Cecil J.	First Sergeant	KIA
Cassidy, Edgar B.	Technical Sergeant	KIA
Castilow, Marshall E.	Private First Class	KIA
Chandler, Harold L.	Private	KIA
Christensen, Paul J.	Private First Class	KIA
Clark, Everett A.	Private First Class	KIA
Coakley, Robert P.	Private First Class	KIA

	GRADE	TYPE OF DEATH
Connolly, Joseph L.	Private First Class	KIA
Copeland, Reginald T.	Private	KIA
Corley, George F.	Second Lieutenant	KIA
Cornthwaite, Russell	Staff Sergeant	KIA
Costante, John F.	Private First Class	KIA
Courtney, Russell W.	Technician Fifth Grade	KIA
Cullen, Joseph J.	Staff Sergeant	KIA
De Rosimo, Domenic S.	Private First Class	KIA
Doucet, Alfred R.	Private First Class	KIA
Erbio, Frank	Staff Sergeant	KIA
Fitzmaurice, Thomas C.	Private First Class	KIA
Fitzpatrick, Robert S.	Private	DOW
Frank, Edward M.	Staff Sergeant	KIA
Fugate, Jesse	Private First Class	KIA
Guthrie, George L.	Private First Class	KIA
Guyer, Harold	Private First Class	DOW
Hamilton, James O.	Private First Class	KIA
Hammock, Alford A.	Corporal	DOW
Hancock, William H.	Private First Class	KIA
Haney, John H., III	Private First Class	DOW
Hart, Roger R.	Private First Class	KIA
Haven, Donald L.	Private First Class	DOW
Hewitt, Roy J.	Private First Class	KIA
Holt, James E.	Private First Class	KIA
Jacksics, Paul R.	Private First Class	KIA
Janis, John F.	Private First Class	KIA
Johns, Alfred	Private First Class	KIA
Johnson, Wilbert F., Jr.	Sergeant	KIA
Kampe, Wilfert J.	Private First Class	KIA
Karsten, Paul R.	Sergeant	DOW
Krystyn, Michael F.	Private First Class	KIA
Kushmider, Lawrence	Private First Class	KIA
Laurie, Albert W.	Private First Class	KIA
Lebeau, William O.	Private First Class	KIA
Lynch, Patrick B.	Sergeant	KIA
Madril, Joaquin	Private First Class	KIA
Marlatt, Herbert M.	First Sergeant	KIA
Mathias, Richard L.	Private First Class	KIA
Milhoan, Chester	Private	KIA
Moder, Walter W.	Private First Class	KIA
Moreland, Russell E.	Private First Class	KIA
Morrow, David	Private First Class	DOW
Nabby, Thomas L.	Staff Sergeant	DOW
Nance, J. B.	Staff Sergeant	DOW
Neal, Lucius W.	Private	KIA
Nugent, James E.	Private	DOW
O'Brien, Christopher	First Lieutenant	KIA
Palermo, Vince C.	Private First Class	KIA
Panos, George	Staff Sergeant	KIA

	GRADE	TYPE OF DEATH
Paulsen, Wagner W.	Private First Class	KIA
Pilbeam, Robert E.	Private First Class	KIA
Porfirio, Santo	Private First Class	KIA
Powell, Richard T.	Technician Third Grade	DOW
Price, Kemp G.	Staff Sergeant	DOW
Rawley, Michael A., Jr.	Private First Class	KIA
Riddle, Robert B.	Private First Class	KIA
Ringo, Marvin L.	Staff Sergeant	KIA
Roberts, Merlin	Technical Sergeant	KIA
Rogers, Deairl J.	Private First Class	KIA
Rollins, Sherman E.	Private First Class	KIA
Roskey, Walter M.	Private First Class	DOW
Salo, Carl W.	Private First Class	DOW
Salvatore, James F.	Private	DOI
Samuels, Irving	Technical Sergeant	KIA
Schmuecker, Melvin A.	Private First Class	KIA
Schultz, Matthew J.	Private First Class	KIA
Scott, William H.	Private	KIA
Seeker, Noel D.	Private First Class	KIA
Seward, Walter K.	Private First Class	KIA
Shreeve, Ray A.	Technician Fifth Grade	KIA
Siconolfi, Ugo	Private	KIA
Siebern, Edwin J.	Technical Sergeant	KIA
Spaulding, Glenn E.	Staff Sergeant	KIA
St. Denis, Armand R.	Staff Sergeant	KIA
Steir, Johnnie	Private	KIA
Stem, William E.	Private First Class	KIA
Stepro, John C., Jr.	Technician Fifth Grade	KIA
Storch, Werner	Private	KIA
Street, Joseph B.	Private First Class	KIA
Swain, Morgan L.	Technical Sergeant	KIA
Tackitt, Ishmael F.	Private	DOW
Thacker, Donald L.	Technician Fifth Grade	DOW
Thomson, John, Jr.	Private First Class	KIA
Traylor, Harry, Jr.	Private First Class	DOW
Tucker, David T.	Private First Class	DOW
Vermillion, John R., Jr.	Private	DOW
Vorce, James S.	Private First Class	DOW
Walls, William C.	Private	KIA
Weaver, Willard R.	Private	DOW
Welsh, Russell J.	Private First Class	KIA
Westlake, James W.	Private First Class	KIA
White, Ralph W.	Private First Class	DOW
Whitman, Thomas M.	Staff Sergeant	KIA
Williams, Loy E.	Private First Class	KIA
Wilson, Cecil F.	Staff Sergeant	KIA
Winans, Albert D.	Private First Class	DOW
Wolf, William F.	Sergeant	KIA
Wolford, Charles R.	Private First Class	KIA
Zavoral, Frank J., Jr.	Staff Sergeant	KIA

HEADQUARTERS 11TH ARMORED DIVISION ARTILLERY

	GRADE	TYPE OF DEATH
Mott, Robert C.	Private First Class	KIA
Pruitt, James L.	Private First Class	KIA
Suarez, Ben B.	Technician Fourth Grade	KIA
Waymire, Dean C.	Staff Sergeant	KIA

11TH ARMORED COMMAND A

Dernsky, Thomas E.	Staff Sergeant	KIA
Hummel, Richard M.	Technician Fifth Grade	KIA
Judkins, Charles T.	Technician Fourth Grade	KIA
Lieber, Konrad	Private First Class	KIA

490TH ARMORED FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION

Caupp, Eugene	Private First Class	KIA
Chamberlain, T. C.	Private	KIA
Greegan, James P.	Sergeant	KIA
Cunningham, John H.	First Lieutenant	KIA
Dunaway, Robert W.	Second Lieutenant	KIA
Flynn, Patrick E.	Corporal	KIA
Neff, Hadley	Second Lieutenaant	KIA
Smith, Alfred J.	Corporal	KIA

491ST ARMORED FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION

Busch, Heino F., Jr.	Staff Sergeant	KIA
Chilton, Alan J.	Private First Class	KIA
Dake, James R.	Corporal	KIA
Knoll, Howard G.	Technician Fifth Grade	KIA
Nusbaum, Walter A.	Technician Fifth Grade	DOW

492ND ARMORED FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION

Black, Russell E.	Corporal	DOW
Brock, William J.	Private First Class	KIA
Gogolen, Robert W.	Technician Fourth Grade	DOW
Torian, David N.	Private	KIA
Treberg, Virgil H.	Second Lieutenant	KIA

41ST CAVALRY RECONNAISSANCE SQUADRON MECHANIZED

Baldrige, Edgar R.	Technician Fifth Grade	KIA
Beedy, Clayton A.	Private	KIA
Biley, Vancil P.	Sergeant	KIA

Black, Wyley L., Jr.	Private First Class	KIA
Boys, Vernon M.	Technician Fourth Grade	DOW
Brady, James F.	Private First Class	KIA
Butas, Paul F.	Private	KIA
Butler, James E.	Private	KIA
Daignault, Harold G.	Technician Fifth Grade	KIA
DeMoret, William, II	Second Lieutenant	KIA
Edwards, Edmund	Staff Sergeant	KIA
Elley, Fermon C.	Private First Class	KIA
Foster, Wilbur C.	Technician Fifth Grade	KIA
Fox, Paul P.	First Sergeant	DOW
Frenyea, Orel J.	Private	KIA
Hembree, Merrell R.	Private First Class	KIA
King, Donald P.	Sergeant	KIA
Kleber, George	Technician Fifth Grade	KIA
Koester, Norman A.	Corporal	KIA
Lang, Willie L.	Technician Fifth Grade	DOW
Lowman, Harry G.	Captain	KIA
McCarty, Daniel L.	Technician Fifth Grade	KIA
Mellblom, Paul	Technician Fifth Grade	KIA
Mercando, Tony J.	Private	KIA
Migliorise, Frank	Technician Fifth Grade	KIA
Miller, Elmer R.	Private First Class	KIA
Miller, Harvey L., Jr.	Private	KIA
Neeman, George J.	Sergeant	KIA
Noss, Harold C.	Technician Fifth Grade	KIA
Perez, Jesus C.	Private	KIA
Pfeil, John A.	Corporal	KIA
Ramsden, Charles W.	Private First Class	KIA
Runkel, Rudolph R.	Technician Fourth Grade	KIA
Schied, Richard J.	Private	KIA
Swanson, William A.	Private	KIA
Tousley, Burton G.	First Lieutenant	KIA
Whitehead, Walter L.	Private	KIA
Wiley, Joseph E.	Technician Fifth Grade	KIA
Williams, Burley H., Jr.	First Lieutenant	KIA
Wilson, Robert C.	Technician Fifth Grade	KIA
Wright, Clarence E.	Private First Class	DOW
Zoll, Forrest J.	Private First Class	DOW

56TH ARMORED ENGINEER BATTALION

Bakewell, Dayton	Private First Class	KIA
Belmont, Lloyd P.	Staff Sergeant	KIA
Bischoff, John R.	Technician Fifth Grade	KIA
Bounds, Robert B.	Private	KIA
Brancaglione, Robert	Staff Sergeant	KIA
Cameron, Joseph E.	Technician Fifth Grade	KIA

Clifford, Thomas M.	Private First Class	KIA
Davison, John T.	Technician Fifth Grade	KIA
Ducey, John J.	Second Lieutenant	KIA
Gerdlund, Kenneth F.	Technician Fifth Grade	KIA
Greenberg, Robert L.	Private	KIA
Hettenbach, A. P., Jr.	Private	DOW
Holt, Lindell F.	Technical Sergeant	KIA
Jacobsen, Arthur J.	Technician Fifth Grade	KIA
Lindsey, William R.	Technician Fourth Grade	KIA
Mamola, Theodore J.	Private	KIA
Mirabal, Vincenti J.	Private First Class	KIA
Mitchell, William E.	Major	KIA
Murphy, Martin R.	Technician Fifth Grade	KIA
Myers, Paul E.	Private First Class	KIA
Peterson, Fred W.	Technician Fifth Grade	KIA
Powers, Albert J.	Corporal	KIA
Rauch, Leonard A.	Private	DOW
Redman, La Verne M.	Private First Class	KIA
Stoops, Charles E.	Private First Class	DOW
Stull, Leonard A.	Corporal	KIA
Tobe, Leo W.	First Lieutenant	KIA
Warcken, Henry	Technician Fifth Grade	DOW
Warcken, William G.	Technician Fifth Grade	DOW
Zoradi, Stephen M.	Technician Fifth Grade	KIA

81ST ARMORED MEDICAL BATTALION

Hector, Lawrence	Private First Class	KIA
Maheras, Peter	Private	DOW
Meyer, Herbert I.	Private	KIA

22ND ARMORED TANK BATTALION

Ahlen, Reuben E.	Private	KIA
Anderson, Inguar L.	Sergeant	KIA
Andrews, Edgar E.	Private First Class	KIA
Andrews, Roy F.	Corporal	KIA
Barnes, William K.	Private	KIA
Beck, Fred H.	Private	KIA
Biasi, Francesco	Private	KIA
Birnie, Robert B.	Technician Fifth Grade	KIA
Bond, Alex	Private First Class	DOW
Brett, James F.	Sergeant	KIA
Browning, Paul M.	Private	KIA
Finney, James G.	Private First Class	KIA
Froncek, Stanley	Technician Fifth Grade	DOW
Hericks, Arthur J.	Technician Fourth Grade	KIA

Hewitt, William J., Jr.	Private First Class	KIA
Jachimowicz, Stanley	Corporal	KIA
Mattox, Harold E.	Private First Class	KIA
McGoldrick, Bernard	Technician Fourth Grade	KIA
McVicar, Lyle R.	Private First Class	KIA
Miller, Elmer R.	Staff Sergeant	KIA
Minnick, Lawrence W.	Captain	KIA
Mortimer, John C.	Private First Class	DOW
Nicholson, Harold W.	Private First Class	DOW
Nielsen, Paul	First Sergeant	KIA
Nielson, George A.	Sergeant	KIA
Oalmann, Edward J.	Private First Class	KIA
Paskauskas, Joseph G.	Private	DOW
Roberts, Nelson P.	First Lieutenant	KIA
Smith, Maurice M.	Private	KIA
Smith, Richard G.	Private First Class	KIA
Sowden, Thomas C.	First Lieutenant	KIA
Vague, Keith A.	Private	KIA
Weller, Daniel M.	Private	KIA
Wolinski, Jan	Private	KIA
Zalsman, William, Jr.	Sergeant	DOW

41ST ARMORED TANK BATTALION

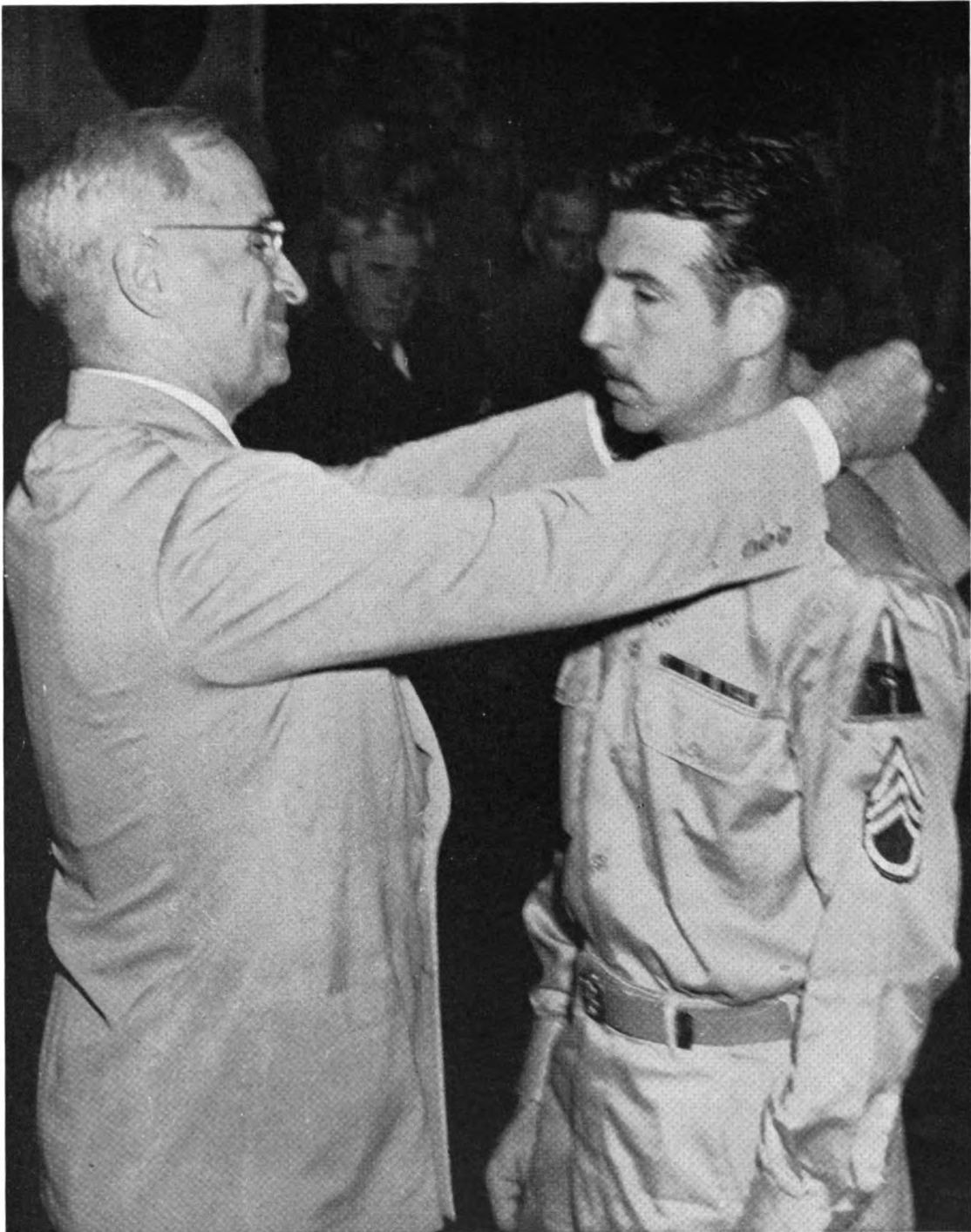
Alexander, Wallace R.	Staff Sergeant	FOD
Ameno, Robert L.	Captain	KIA
Bates, Albert V.	Technician Fourth Grade	DOW
Benbow, Francis J.	Private First Class	KIA
Bielaska, Stephen J.	Captain	KIA
Bobela, Andrew	Corporal	KIA
Buckley, Daniel B.	Corporal	KIA
Campbell, Leo E.	Private First Class	KIA
Caputo, Joe	Sergeant	DOW
Carey, Hubert J.	Private First Class	KIA
Chadwick, Stanley K.	Private First Class	KIA
Colby, Loyd A.	Technician Fifth Grade	KIA
Doerscheln, Kenneth	Private	KIA
Eulosiewicz, John P.	Technician Fourth Grade	KIA
Foote, Harry W.	Second Lieutenant	KIA
Gardner, William F.	Captain	DOW
Hansen, Lewis H.	Technician Fourth Grade	DOW
Harris, Ralph S.	Staff Sergeant	KIA
Holeman, James T., Jr.	Private First Class	KIA
Holub, Arthur J.	Corporal	DOW
Huerner, Charles R.	Private First Class	KIA
Hunley, Everitt B.	Technician Fourth Grade	KIA
Jones, Jon M.	Sergeant	KIA

Kraeblen, Chester	Private First Class	KIA
Krajewski, Steve J.	Private First Class	KIA
Lowery, Glynn S.	Technician Fifth Grade	KIA
McCleane, James J.	Staff Sergeant	KIA
McIntyre, Frank L., Jr.	Technician Fifth Grade	KIA
Meredity, Louis R.	Corporal	KIA
Mock, Clifford K.	Technician Fourth Grade	DOW
Oborn, Lawrence J., Jr.	Private	KIA
Quinn, William H.	Private First Class	KIA
Robinson, John B.	Sergeant	KIA
Rossi, Louis	Corporal	KIA
Roth, Robert L.	Corporal	KIA
Schmitz, Rudolph E.	Corporal	KIA
Scott, George A.	Captain	KIA
Sperro, John	Private First Class	KIA
Stenerson, Harry C.	Corporal	KIA
Strothers, Charles R.	First Lieutenant	
Sucharda, Gene E.	Captain	KIA
Turner, Robert T.	Private First Class	KIA
Vinyard, Marcus L.	Private	KIA
Walsh, James J., Jr.	Private	KIA
Wilkins, Chester D.	Captain	KIA
Wood, Francis H.	Sergeant	KIA
Yates, Frank J.	Corporal	KIA

42ND ARMORED TANK BATTALION

Ackerman, Alden L.	Private First Class	KIA
Akers, George E.	Private First Class	KIA
Babe, George F.	Corporal	KIA
Bloom, Wayne A.	Technician Fourth Grade	DOW
Byler, Vance K.	First Lieutenant	KIA
Bregni, Lewis	Technician Fifth Grade	KIA
Brown, William B.	Private	KIA
Cantrell, Leroy	Private	DOW
Coyne, John C.	Corporal	KIA
De Prisco, Ralph J.	Private First Class	KIA
Diaz, Justino	Technician Fifth Grade	DOW
Edleblute, Calvin M.	Corporal	KIA
Evans, Arden R.	Private First Class	KIA
Everett, Thomas W.	Staff Sergeant	KIA
Fallon, Richard E.	Private	KIA
Fermanian, Alfred	Second Lieutenant	KIA
Flesvig, Glenn P.	Private First Class	KIA
Forry, Howard W., Jr.	Technician Fourth Grade	KIA
Freelan, Robert A.	Sergeant	KIA
French, Kenneth H.	Sergeant	DOW
Fulkerson, Charles L.	Sergeant	KIA

	GRADE	TYPE OF DEATH
Gebhardt, August J.	Technician Fourth Grade	KIA
Glynn, Michael J.	Captain	KIA
Gorman, Vincent C.	First Lieutenant	KIA
Hackney, William P.	First Lieutenant	KIA
Hallman, Edward J.	Sergeant	KIA
Heiden, Marvin C.	Sergeant	DOW
Helsten, John W.	Technician Fourth Grade	KIA
Hershkowitz, David D.	Technician Fifth Grade	KIA
Hoffman, Walter K.	Technician Fifth Grade	KIA
Horowitz, Alex	Sergeant	DOW
Jiricek, Alfred	Private First Class	KIA
Kargus, Floyd F.	Technician Fifth Grade	KIA
Kizis, William R.	Private	KIA
Koenegstein, Homer F.	Staff Sergeant	DOW
Kohl, William C.	Sergeant	DOW
Lawver, Vernon E.	Sergeant	KIA
Lendl, Herman H.	Corporal	KIA
Leonard, Lee E.	Sergeant	KIA
Lewis, Charles A.	Private First Class	KIA
Lindsey, Cecil M.	Sergeant	KIA
McEachern, Donald F.	First Lieutenant	KIA
McWilliams, Kenneth	Technician Fourth Grade	KIA
Mewhorter, Lawrence G.	Sergeant	KIA
Montiel, Roberto V.	Private	KIA
Oliver, Harold E.	Staff Sergeant	KIA
Page, Clifford E.	Sergeant	KIA
Peirce, David	Corporal	KIA
Perry, Darwin H.	Private First Class	KIA
Plevel, Joseph A.	Private First Class	KIA
Pociopa, Donald F.	Technician Fifth Grade	KIA
Putzier, Vincent J.	Private	KIA
Richardson, Harold F.	Private First Class	KIA
Rumage, John L.	Private	KIA
Russell, Vivian E.	Staff Sergeant	KIA
Sanderson, Albert J.	Technician Fourth Grade	KIA
Sardeson, Joseph	Private First Class	KIA
Shaw, Virgil S.	Private	KIA
Shellhouse, Glen R.	Private	KIA
Shull, Joseph H.	Private First Class	KIA
Sommerland, Nelson E.	Sergeant	KIA
Stebler, Paul J., Sr.	Private	KIA
Tevoert, Harold W.	Sergeant	KIA
Volz, Raymond J.	Private	KIA
Warriner, George D.	Captain	KIA
Waugh, Eugene L.	Private	KIA
Weymer, Walter P.	Corporal	KIA
Williams, Thomas O.	Technician Fifth Grade	KIA
Winchester, Murry W.	Corporal	KIA



President Truman Pins the Congressional Medal of Honor on Staff Sergeant
Herbert H. Burr, Company C, 41st Tank Battalion, 11th Armored Division

IN THE BEGINNING





LOMMEL was threatening the Suez, Cairo and the entire Allied lifeline in the Middle East when the 11th Armored Division was brought into being on August 15, 1942 at Camp Polk, Louisiana.

Creation of the 11th Armored Division signaled the Army's intention of having more than the 10 armored divisions it had originally planned. Armor was destined to play an important role in coming American World War II campaigns.

To the Army's newest armored division on August 15, 1942, came Brigadier General Edward H. Brooks, its new commanding general, who had been artillery officer of the Armored Force. With him were Brigadier General Charles S. Kilburn and Colonel Charles L. Mullins, Jr., to command the Division's two combat commands. Enlisted men to form the 11th Armored Division cadre came from the Third, Seventh and Eighth Armored Divisions. The Thunderbolt was cast.

Tasks of the Division's cadre were many as it prepared for the arrival of the Division's early members. Often as many as a thousand men would arrive in one day. Truck after truck shuttled endless columns of men from trains to their new homes—barracks, blankets, hot meals and hot showers.

As enlisted men settled into training routines, staff officers worked tirelessly in preparing schedules and programs whose detailed accuracy would determine eventually the worth of the entire effort.

In late 1942 the members of the Division were found engaged in tough training. The training schedule required the raw recruits of the 11th Armored Division to be combat-qualified by April of the following year. It was a large order but the Division was determined to carry it through.

Without civilian parallel was the life men of the 11th Armored Division found when first they surveyed their surroundings at Camp Polk. Gone were loosely fitting civilian clothes, traffic lights, leisurely eaten meals, and the hundreds of other things that are part of everyday civilian life. Men of the Eleventh were in the Army now. Blending of long-prepared and perfected lecture theories with practical experience was the Division's goal. No detail of application that might possibly be useful in combat was overlooked.

Skill, in the use and maintenance of the medium and heavy weapons so typical of an armored division's offensive force became a prime concern of the knowledge-absorbing recruits of the Division. Huge tank-chassis mounted cannon and pack howitzers, halftrack and smaller vehicle

mounted medium weapons—all required the utmost of intense training to develop the automatic battle skills necessary in a battle-ready unit.

Measures to protect troops and equipment from enemy use of chemical warfare were taught the men in preparing them for combat. Plane identification, highly important so that a man can protect himself against enemy aerial bombardment and strafing, came in for a concentrated share of training hours and effort. Men to whom maps had been only geographical riddles or road aids learned azimuths, compass employment and contours. Obstacle courses were responsible for many an aching body during those strenuous training days.

Linked by the inseparable bond of military necessity to the long hours of physical conditioning, however, were equally long days of repeated instructions in the most basic of all military matters—weapons. Division members became specialists in mortars, machine guns, rifles, pistols, artillery pieces and all the other necessary weapons of war.

Next came infiltration courses and the whine of live bullets over the heads of trainees. Training was beginning to take on a realistic atmosphere.

When Thunderbolts marched past the reviewing stand on New Year's Day, 1943 it was the end of the beginning for them. A few weeks before they had been unmilitary recruits, but today on New Year's they looked like soldiers. Inspectors studied units and men of the 11th Armored Division in early 1943, when tests arranged by III Armored Corps weighed progress of the Division's training in the first months of its existence. Officers of the Armored Corps, headed by Major General Willis D. Crittenberger, Corps commanding general, toured motor parks and marksmanship ranges, watched physical fitness tests and studied every phase of training.

Few fighting units trained to capture victory in World War II were fortunate enough to receive from their own leaders a report on the progress of American arms already engaged in battle. Early in 1943 General Brooks returned from North Africa, where he toured American troops and military establishments with Lieutenant General Jacob L. Devers, then commander of the nation's armored forces, and gave to the Thunderbolt Division a detailed word picture of the days and duties which were ahead when training was completed.

As Spring, 1943 arrived at Camp Polk, Louisiana, so did a group of members of the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps. The 11th Armored Division was on hand to greet them. And in following weeks the young women became the toasts of countless company parties, dances and Service Club functions. In many instances members of the WAAC were given military instruction by 11th Armored Division instructors.



Although training consumed most of the Division's time, Thunderbolts managed to squeeze in sports activities in quantity. There were football, baseball, basketball, boxing, bowling, volley ball and others.

Religion was not neglected either in the early days. Sunday mornings found the Thunderbolt chapels filled with 11th Armored Division members.

While the Division was stationed at Camp Polk a steady stream of famous talent entertained its members from time to time. Cary Grant, Joan Bondell, Jerry Colonna, Bob Hope, Frances Langford, Frank McHugh, are just a few that visited the Division during its training days.

After basic training came a period of Louisiana maneuvers, an experience common to hundreds of thousands of soldiers. From the garrison life of Camp Polk the Division suddenly found itself housed in tents.

Dust, dirt and digging became familiar to every last man of the Division. Louisiana maneuvers were underway.

Many and varied were the tactical lessons of movement absorbed daily on maneuvers by the men whose vehicles seemed to move almost without halt across fields, through pine forests and over streams in Louisiana and Texas.

During maneuvers Sabine River crossings became a habit. Every conceivable type of crossing was made by the Division. Along with river crossings the laying of pontoon bridges also became "second nature" to Division engineers. Just after the completion of Louisiana maneuvers the 11th Armored Division was ordered to make a permanent change of station to Camp Barkeley, Texas, near Abilene. First armored division to inhabit Camp Barkeley and make Abilene its off-duty home, the Eleventh found hospitality far surpassing even the well known stories of Texas' cordiality. Extensive, well-planned and well-organized, Camp Barkeley provided gratefully received diversion, even in its training facilities and geographical location, for the maneuver-hardened Thunderbolts who arrived in the late summer of 1943. Hardly had the Division scouted its surroundings when the deorganization of armored divisions reached the Eleventh, to dissolve three of the principal units which had comprised the Division from its activation—the 41st and 42nd Armored Regiments and the 55th Armored Infantry Regiment.

While at Camp Barkeley the Division participated in many civilian programs that were planned to stimulate the civilian war effort—especially the purchase of war bonds. War bond sales among men of the Eleventh soared at Barkeley, producing one of the highest percentages of Division participation in the Army's world-wide bond buying campaign at that time.

New equipment, replacing much of the maneuver-worn material which accompanied the Division from Louisiana to Texas, arrived at Camp Barkeley during the Eleventh's short stay at the Texas camp. Many vehicles were overhauled, parts replaced and given paint jobs, although the Division was destined to use them only for short weeks. New artillery observation planes were delivered to the 11th Armored Division at Barkeley by trim feminine members of the WASPS, women's ferrying organization.

Suddenly in the fall of 1943 the order came for the Thunderbolt Division to evacuate Camp Barkeley and prepare for the most realistic of all battle-training—desert maneuvers. As October, 1943 drew to a close train after train loaded with 11th Armored Division personnel and equipment left Camp Barkeley headed for the California desert.

Hardly two months after respite was granted the 11th Armored Division at the end of Louisiana maneuvers, men of the Thunderbolt were streaming from trains at tiny desert stations marked by little more than water towers and the shacks of section crews. The Eleventh was settling down in the desert for the 1943-44 winter.

The Mojave Desert of California presented new problems to Division troops. Tankers, artillerymen and infantrymen, accustomed to the sharp, landmarked lands of Louisiana and Texas, added to their training experience in the new problems of range estimation which required constant use of binoculars and keen vision. Long distance communication by radio took on new responsibilities, and camouflage, in the coverless desert wastes, required constant and unrelenting attention. Maintenance, too, in the wind-borne clouds of sand, assumed new and difficult aspects.

Central point of the Division organization in the desert was Headquarters Circle at Ibis, situated at the halfway point of the long Eleventh tent-camp area.

Chemical warfare's chief weapon of World War II, smoke, played an important role in many of the desert's maneuver phases. Hovering low between desert peaks, cloudlike vapors from smoke pots rapidly covered huge areas, obscuring effectively all troop movements. Infantrymen, pressing forward in maneuver exercises to assault fixed enemy positions, often were granted the cloak of protective smoke as they moved into battle.

In January, 1944, when the 11th Armored Division moved into the field new battle-suggestive maneuvers experiences awaited it. At Palen Pass, scene of attack and defense by most units training in the Mojave, Thunderbolt men attacked, attacked and attacked again through sleepless nights and trying days.



Hosts of the men of the Division on their repeated weekend visits to the Nevada city, the people of Las Vegas watched that Western's town most pretenious display of military might move through its streets on November 11, 1943. Tanks of several Thunderbolt units joined to stage the Armistice Day parade, when General Brooks shared with the state's senior senator, Pat McCarran, chief speaking honors on the program.

Only twice throughout the Division's entire period at Ibis and on desert maneuvers was the monotonously nutritious diet of iron rations withdrawn for a more varied menu. On Thanksgiving and at Christmas hundreds of plump turkeys, delivered to anxiously awaiting mess staffs, became unprecedented feasts.

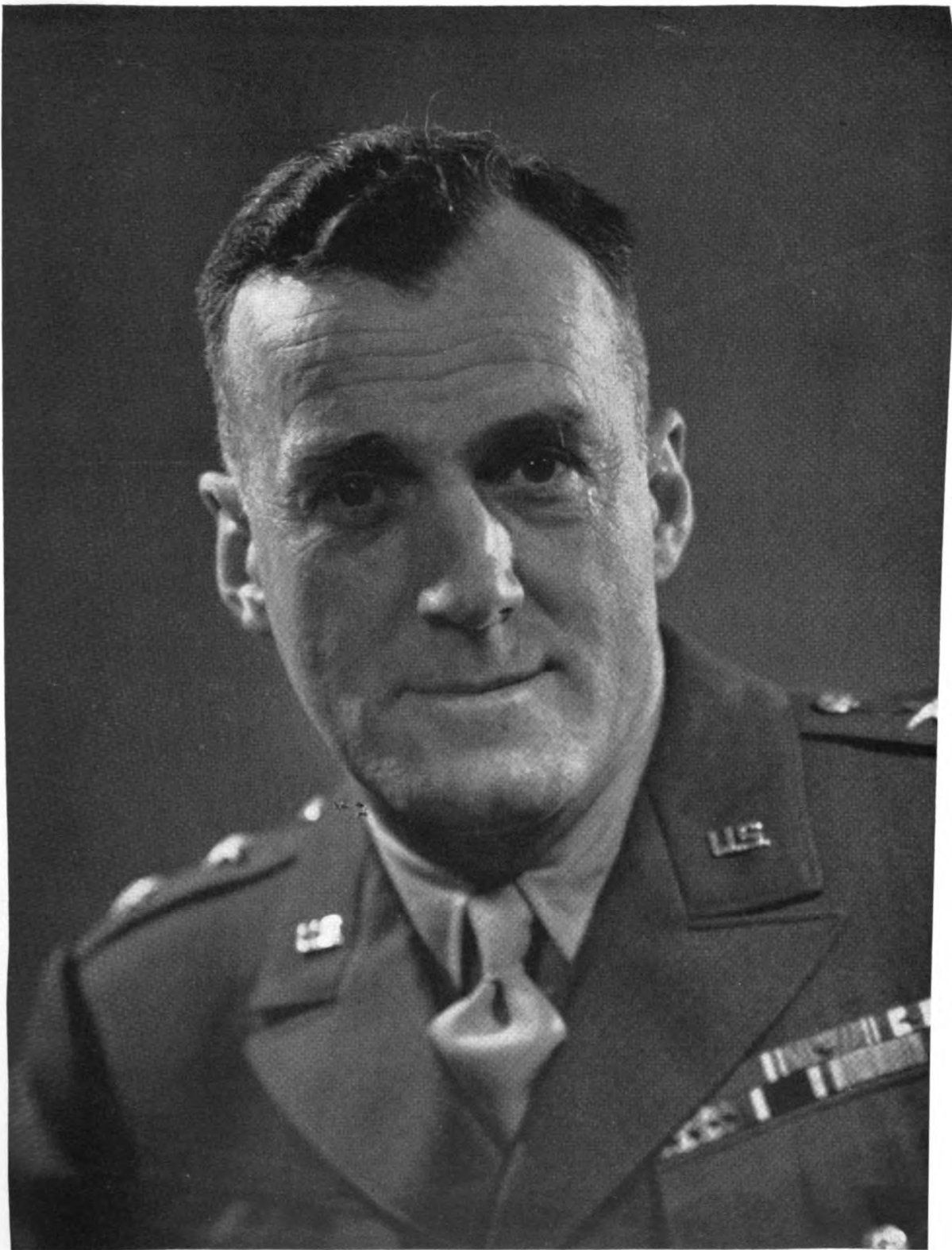
Entertainment for the Division troops on desert maneuvers was provided by the USO Camp Shows and the Hollywood Victory Committee, who occasionally played to capacity audiences at the Ampitheater.

Repopulated for brief days by men and machines of the 11th Armored Division after desert maneuvers were ended, Ibis soon rejoined the solitude of the Mojave as the Thunderbolt Division loaded, men and equipment, on trains and convoys for the journey to its next training station—Camp Cooke, California.

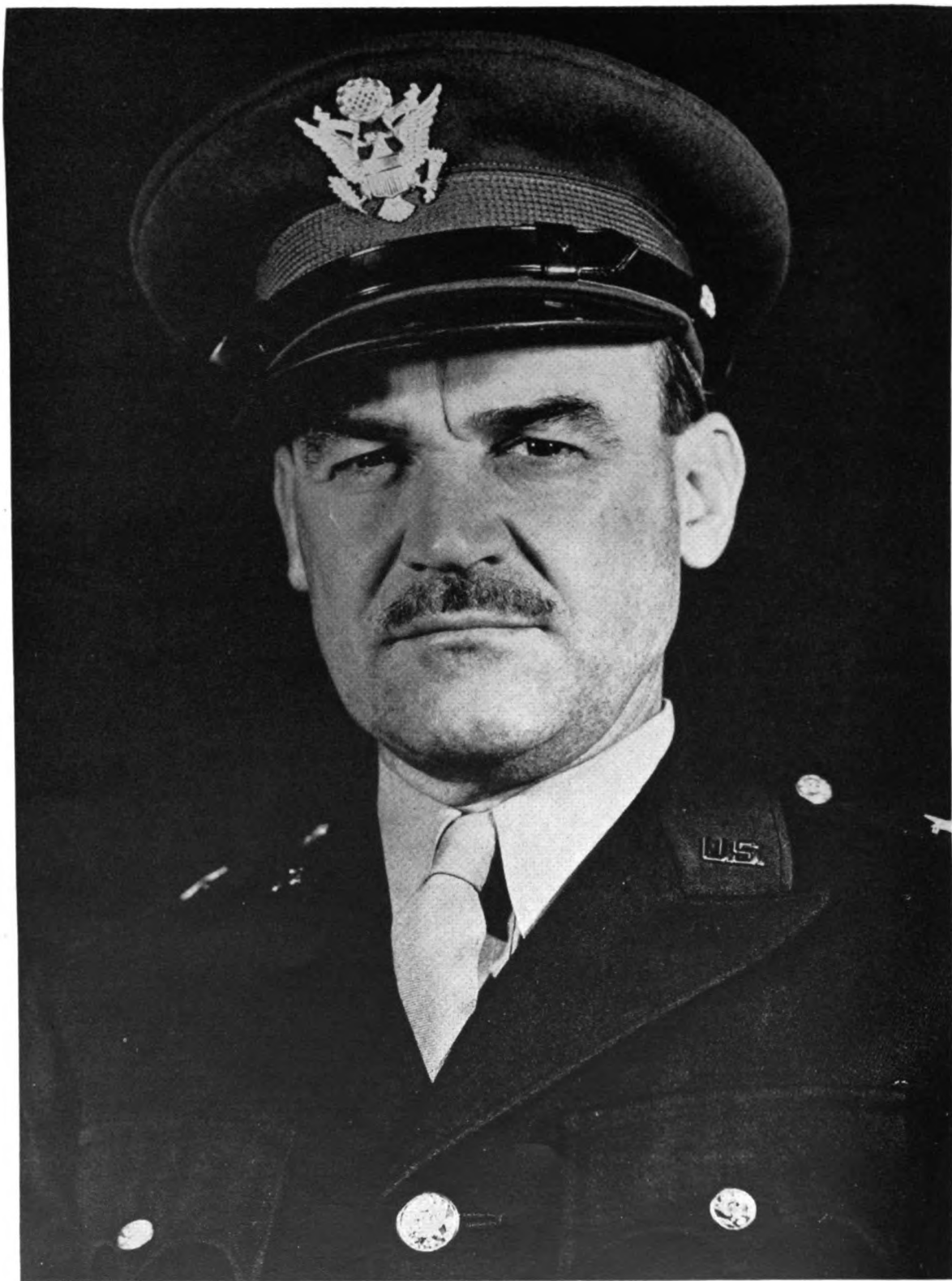
Scientific testing of the individual and organizational training of men and units began immediately upon the Division's arrival at Camp Cooke, and coincidentally final training polish of many facets of the Division's battle fitness was carried on.

A change in command of the Division was made in March, 1944 when General Brooks left to join battle-tested troops awaiting the invasion. Brigadier General Charles S. Kilburn assumed command.





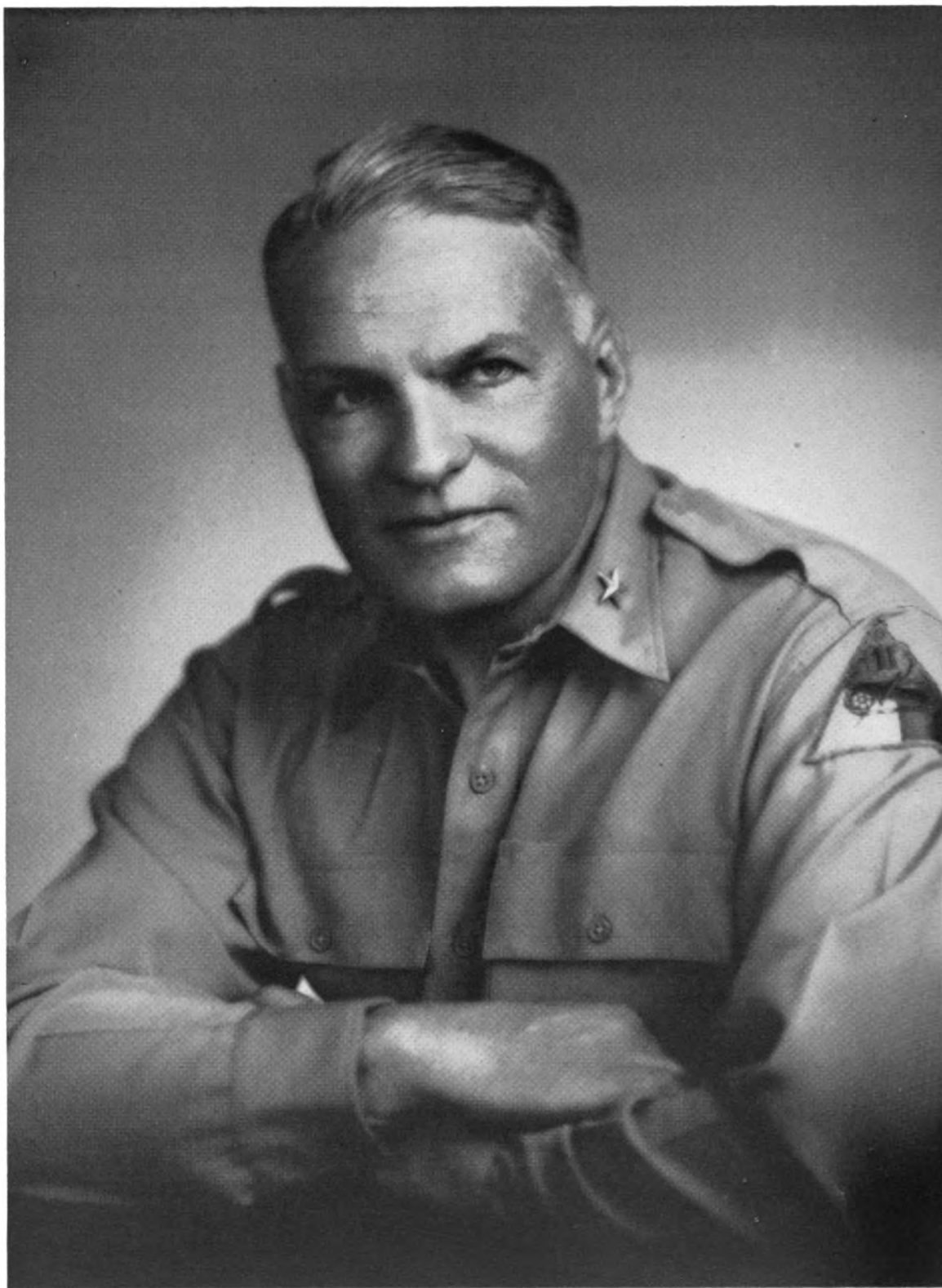
MAJOR GENERAL EDWARD H. BROOKS
Commanding General
August 1942 to March 1944



BRIGADIER GENERAL CHARLES S. KILBURN
Commanding General
March 1944 to March 1945



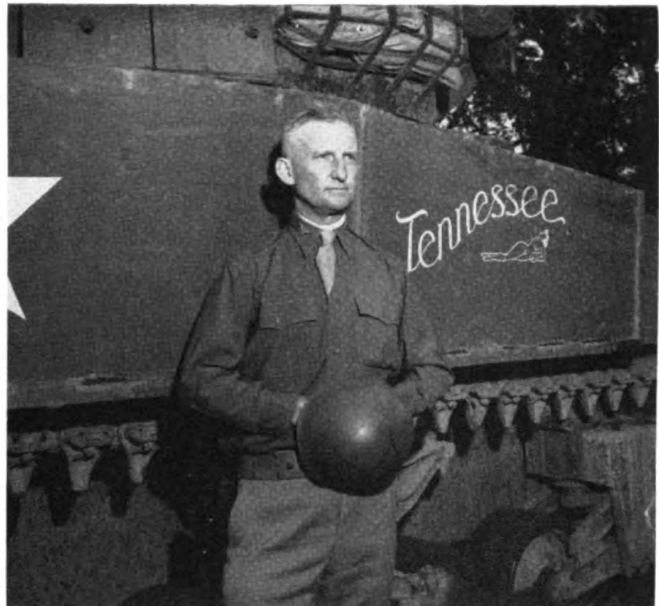
MAJOR GENERAL HOLMES E. DAGER
Commanding General
March 1945 to September 1945



BRIGADIER GENERAL WILLARD A. HOLBROOK, JR.
Commanding General, Combat Command A



COLONEL JOHN HOWARD
Division Artillery Commander



COLONEL WESLEY W. YALE
Commanding Officer of Combat Command B



COLONEL ROBERT W. LOWE
Trains Commander



COLONEL VIRGIL BELL
Commanding Officer of the Reserve Command

PREPARATION FOR COMBAT

By

**Brigadier General
CHARLES S. KILBURN**





ON MARCH 8, 1944 confidential orders from the War Department were received at Division Headquarters transferring Major General Edward H. Brooks to an overseas command which later proved to be that of Commanding General of the Second Armored Division. General Brooks led the Second Armored Division over the beaches of Normandy shortly after D-Day and, as a part of the First Army, participated in the Saint Lo breakthrough shortly thereafter with brilliant success. General Brooks led the pursuit of the First Army northward to the Belgium border. During this pursuit, he with a small number of his staff and a small detachment ambushed a sizeable German column and through effective command control, resulting in prompt reinforcement, practically annihilated the hostile force. Because of the outstanding achievements of the Second Armored Division under his leadership, General Brooks was soon elevated to command the VI Corps which assignment he held at the end of the war.

On the departure of General Brooks, Brigadier General Charles S. Kilburn assumed command of the Division. On March 16 War Department orders were issued confirming, officially, his assignment as division commander.

The division, on the departure of General Brooks, also lost the Chief of Staff who had so ably handled all staff matters since its activation, Colonel Charles D. Palmer. Charlie Palmer joined 'Ted' Brooks as Chief of Staff in the Second Armored Division and moved with him to the VI Corps in the same capacity where he was promoted to Brigadier General in the early Spring of 1945.

With General Kilburn moving up to division headquarters from CC A a new realignment in command channels became necessary. For the resumption of a strenuous training schedule, after the readjustment of equipment incident to the movement of the division from the Desert to Camp Cooke, the following command slate materialized:

Division Commander
 Brigadier General Charles S. Kilburn
 Commanding CCA Colonel Willard A. Holbrook
 (transferred from Division Trains)
 Commanding CC B Colonel Thomas Stark
 Commanding Division Reserve Colonel Virgil Bell
 Division Artillery Colonel John H. Howard
 (Replaced Colonel William Gilmore who had
 departed for an important assignment in Italy
 and who shortly thereafter was promoted to
 Brigadier General)
 Division Trains Colonel Robert Lowe

It is of interest to note here that all battalion commanders announced on the reorganization of the division in September, 1943 were still serving in those positions and were to continue to do so until the end of the war with two exceptions; Lieutenant Colonel Theodore G. Bilbo

who left command of the 490 F.A. later to become Executive Officer of CC A, and Lieutenant Colonel James R. Hoffman of the 21st Armored Infantry Battalion who was injured in action on the first day of combat. It was a most fortunate record for a division to go through the combat experienced by the 11th Armored Division with only one casualty among Battalion commanders; although Joe Ahee was out of action for 24 hours with an embarrassing wound. To replace Colonel Palmer as Chief of Staff, Colonel Wesley W. Yale arrived on April 3 and assumed that position.

Preparatory to leaving the desert, the division received orders to evacuate to Camp Cooke all motor equipment in its possession as well as other motor equipment in various motor pools scattered throughout the desert as the War Department had resolved to liquidate the Desert Training Command at that time. With an abundance of motor vehicles of all types, the movement to Camp Cooke was materially facilitated. Upon arrival at Cooke it was found that all motor equipment of the 6th Armored Division, including tanks, was available to the division, the 6th having departed for the ETO. From the accumulated equipment now present at Cooke, the division was enabled to equip itself promptly and effectively for the important training ahead, although it meant again the usual prodigious and efficient efforts of all maintenance echelons.

Excess motor equipment was turned in at Camp Roberts wherein lay an unusual incident insofar as the division was concerned. For the only time in its existence, the division was charged indirectly with improper care of motor equipment. For the movement of the division from the desert, our identification symbols had been placed on the bumpers of all vehicles. It was thus that vehicles turned into Roberts bore the 11th AD. The Inspector General of the Army, visiting that camp at this time noted some of these vehicles and indicated that they showed signs of abuse. When presented with information that we merely had evacuated the vehicles from the desert and the "11th AD" was installed only for the overland march, the matter was clarified and dropped.

With the approach of D-Day, which was common knowledge, our ensuing training was considered in the light of "pay dirt". The following objectives were emphasized:

Final qualifications in marksmanship with all weapons, both of an individual character and of a crew nature, including the 57mm Anti-tank Cannon.

Final phases of artillery firing including fires over tanks and infantry, concentration of massed fires, etc.

Tactical employment of tanks in various roles—offense, delaying action, defense, etc.

Communications—perfection of individual operators up to combat command and division control nets, emphasizing use of simple and effective code procedures.



Constant small exercises utilizing all supporting fires—machine guns, mortars, bazookas, artillery.

Platoon, company and battalion problems culminating in the employment of small task forces using small detachments of all arms—infantry, tanks, engineers, medical, etc.

During this period, also, stress was paid to high standards of unit internal housekeeping with kitchens and messes receiving particular attention. As a result, our standards of sanitation were acknowledged in all subsequent inspections from higher levels.

It was evident at this time that our remaining opportunities for training might be limited. It appeared appropriate, therefore, for the new division commander to orient all members of the division on the aspects present under such circumstances. Accordingly, at an assembly of the division on March 24, the following features of an effective combat force were covered:

Discipline—only a division with great esprit and pride can be said to hold high standards of discipline, for that intangible virtue is based primarily on self respect as well as respect for those individuals from whom the fibers of discipline emanate in any group—discipline based on loyalty springs from the top, in the squad, the platoon, company all the way up.

Military Courtesy—There is only one standard, high. Several laudatory messages were read from various letters and military reports illustrating the current reputation of the division in both civilian and military spheres.

Maintenance—Only vehicles which run are effective in combat. Lives may depend on the excellence of maintenance at that time. Maintenance of weapons, and of personnel from the point of view of medical attention and operation of messes is equally important.

Training for combat—A definite objective in every day's training. No unit must suffer the consequences of lost time and lowered morale induced by ill prepared training periods. Now was the time for combined training to inculcate mutual confidence; infantry in tanks—tanks in the infantry—both in our artillery.

Mental preparation for combat—Now was the time to visualize the shock and rigors of battle. Training to produce as close simulation to combat as possible. The first days of combat at Bastogne paid with interest the days of training now at Cooke.

High standards—All adjacent units to adopt the standards of the division—not the division falling to the standards of any neighbors. The division to excel in any undertaking. The unconfirmed report that certain young women of the community considered members of the division below par in dancing must cease. To overcome such delinquency, the prohibition against the wearing

of light civilian shoes was herewith rescinded. Even in the field of jitter-bugging, the division would excel.

On March 31 an additional assembly was conducted involving only the officers of the division in order to re-orient certain factors of importance to all leaders. The first obligation and duty of an officer concerned the care and welfare of men whose fortune it was to fall under his command. Only those who set example by precept in personal and military conduct met the standard of an accepted leader within the 11th AD.

The activities of the division during the period April-August may be covered under the following general features: During April and May small unit problems were conducted concurrently with final phases of marksmanship.

In June every unit of the division conducted a problem under combat command, Reserve and Trains Headquarters supervision. Each problem included at least one black-out march. Training for the month culminated in combat command and reserve command exercises, utilizing all arms in a fire problem. By this time the fires of our artillery had become highly efficient and every problem involved the use of artillery overhead firing.

Artillery firing went on constantly. A minor incident on May 12 restricted materially our available firing areas. On that date, with all battalions participating, a fluke ricochet struck the crack Daylight Limited of the Southern Pacific. Fragments penetrated the dining car injuring two persons. As a precaution, the northern artillery area was withdrawn from use, which thereafter confined all firing to the southern area.

With battle lessons coming in from the Pacific and from Europe, particularly after D-Day, much attention was given to air ground liaison and the principles of close air support for ground troops. As no Army Air Force tactical elements were available on the West Coast, rather close ties were established with the Navy Training Command with headquarters at San Diego. Admiral Ralph Davis demonstrated the greatest interest and arranged for the participation of naval close support aviation in several exercises with the division.

On July 18 word was received that Major General Charles L. Mullins, Commanding General 25th Infantry Division (previously CG, CCB) had requested the assignment of Colonel Stark as his Chief of Staff. Official orders were received within a few days confirming this new assignment for Colonel Stark. On August 15, Colonel J. J. B. Williams, who had served as Patton's Chief of Artillery in North Africa and who was currently on duty with the Armored Force Center reported at Cooke as our new Chief of Staff. Colonel Yale left the position of Chief of Staff for reassignment as the new commander of CCB.



By the first of August our preparatory measures for movement overseas were well along. As a final gesture of combat training, before packing weapons and turning in vehicles prevented their use, arrangements were made for a concluding problem utilizing all arms along lines of the most recent combat lessons. On August 8, with the Corps Commander, Major General John Millikin, present, the division undertook a rather formidable exercise in conjunction with a large contingent of naval aircraft in close support. The entire division, less participating troops, occupied grandstand seats for the event. After an artillery preparation with salvos falling some 500 yards in front of the spectators, the engineers of Lieutenant Colonel Inge with accompanying infantry in support, reduced a simulated enemy fortified strong points. Two task forces then advanced as a coordinated attack on a distant objective under the support of naval dive bombers. Our measures for air-ground liaison proved effective, as the objective came under prompt and severe punishment from the air. After leading tanks had over-run the hostile position, the exercise terminated in an assault by tank borne infantry to occupy the dominating high ground and initiate a pursuit while the artillery, by overhead fire, searched the routes of retirement of the simulated enemy. The entire event was executed with precision to the entire satisfaction of the division commander and the approval of the corps commander.

While orientation for movement overseas started as early as June, practical measures started in earnest after the first of July. Medical requirements such as various inoculations as well as dental corrections were processed on a 24-hour schedule. Each unit established a key group qualified in all details of packing with the 56th Engineers acting in the leading role for the division.

On June 1, a message to division headquarters inquired as to whether the division could be ready for overseas service by July 1. The answer by the division commander to higher authority was an unqualified "YES". Although unconfirmed, it was later learned that the foregoing inquiry was based on a request from General MacArthur's Headquarters that the 11th A.D. be made available to the Pacific. It is to be assumed the Combined Chiefs of Staff decided that the maximum armored strength be assembled in the ETO, hence our decisive role at Bastogne and historic pursuit into Eastern Europe.

During our tour at Camp Cooke a number of notable persons visited the division.

In the last week of March, a letter from the Secretary of War advised that the Postmaster General, the Honorable Frank C. Walker would visit the division. Mr. Walker participated in a luncheon at Division Hq Staff Mess which impresses him to this day. In addition to witnessing

the training under way at the time, one vehicle of each type within the division was assembled for his inspection. The NCO in charge of each vehicle described the mechanical features and tactical purpose of it. Mr. Walker was not only highly impressed with the quality of Army vehicles but more so with the poise and quality of the men who operated them in the 11th AD. The highlight of the Postmaster General's visit was the opportunity of seeing Captain Robert Ameno of the 41st Tank Battalion. Within a short time Louise Walker, daughter of the Postmaster General and Mrs. Walker, and "Bob" Ameno were married. Captain Ameno, the highest type of American young manhood, was killed in action at the head of his tanks in a most gallant maneuver on our first day of combat at Bastogne.

On May 2, General Marshall paid a surprise visit to the division. The division commander received implicit instructions that no program of a special nature was to be prepared or followed, nor would any information ensure as to the presence of the Chief of Staff at Cooke. General Marshall visited the training areas of each type unit undergoing routine schedules; however, with all radios in the division fairly active it is questionable as to whether his approach to any area was any great surprise. The Chief of Staff was impressed with the standards of training he witnessed, especially a firing problem under way by the infantry under the supervision of Virgil Bell. The concluding event of his visit involved a talk to all officers and NCO's (first three grades) of the division in which the principal topic concerned the need of the most expeditious manner of ending the war with minimum casualties. On June 5 Mr. Peter B. Kyne, the eminent author, paid us a visit as the guest of the division commander, an old friend of long standing. The high touch of Peter Kyne's visit comprised a one man tank exercise. As an Artillery battery commander in the First World War, he was accustomed to only indirect fire with his 75's. Since that war it had been his aspiration to fire a 75mm as a direct fire weapon; the tank was the answer. Accordingly under the tender care of a selected tank crew of the 41st Tank Battalion, Peter Kyne lined up on his first target at 1100 yards and in his words "knocked the --ll out of it". With direct hits on the next two rounds, the exercise was completed and the participants, including the tank, returned to the Company motor pool; the eminent author was content. During the stay of Peter Kyne, the division received another distinguished gentleman through the good offices of G-1, "Ole" Olson, — Mr. Jim Jeffries, former heavyweight champion of the world. Both visitors attended a camp boxing card where "Jim" officiated as referee. Both were impressed with the offensive power of every Thunderbolt fighter including the renowned "Andy" Anderson of the 42nd Tankers.

Visits from various inspection groups occurred frequently. Two parties from the Armored Force Center at Fort Knox



looked us over in April and again in July. On both occasions, their comments registered the high standards of training and maintenance found in all units. Inspectors from the Chief of Ordnance and other agencies conveyed similar laudatory views. The climax in inspections took place in the latter part of August when Lieutenant General Ben Lear, Chief of Ground Forces, with a considerable staff spent two days looking us over before we started for the Port of Embarkation. At the same time Major General Charles L. Scott, Chief of the Armored Force was present. General Scott was interested, particularly, in the training of tank marksmanship then in final stages. In July the Division Commander with Combat Command and Reserve Command commanders had attended a special course at Fort Knox stressing the highlights of a newly conceived procedure along this line of training. On their return, the features of this new procedure were immediately instituted in the Division with the result that all tank personnel had completed the course prior to departure from Cooke. General Scott was elated with his observations in the division. General Lear was especially interested in the progress of the Orientation and Educational measures developed in the Division. He requested that our measures be outlined in the way of an S.O.P. (Standard Operating Procedure) which was accomplished superbly by Lieutenant Harold Gilliam and his crew of assistants including Ted Cronyn. Our S.O.P. as provided the Army Ground Forces was subsequently distributed to the Army at large.

During our stay at Cooke, a number of events, beyond the purview of routine training took place.

On March 11, 12 and 13 a selected group comprising all arms participated in an elaborate "War Bond Drive" in the amphitheater at San Diego. For three consecutive nights, this group of Thunderbolts, under the charge of Lieutenant Colonel Bray, C.O. of the 63rd Armored Infantry Battalion, demonstrated modern war before crowds of 30,000 or over. Every feature of war by small elements, which was practical, was introduced into the demonstration. On the final night the work of the detachment was witnessed by high Army and Navy brass including the division commander before a S.R.O. crowd. Numerous letters were received at Division Headquarters commending the outstanding performance of these representatives of the Division as well as their exemplary appearance and conduct in San Diego.

On the Fourth of July the Division was represented at Santa Barbara in a most spectacular demonstration. Again the spirit to excell was manifest in the appearance of all equipment and the personal conduct of every member participating. Again laudatory letters were later received expressing esteem for members of the Division by the California public.

On Easter Morning the Division Chaplain, Chaplain Johnston, organized a sunrise service. Although on the chilly side by way of weather a large attendance gathered for services. It was the initial appearance of the division's choir which was to reap much appreciation as time went under the inspirational leadership of Chaplain Hamilton of the Division Artillery. All who were privileged to hear this men's choir fell under its spell. Requests came in from San Diego to Seattle and as far East as Salt Lake City for its presence.

One of the outstanding events of a religious character grew from the inspiration of Chaplain Gilbert who had but recently joined the division from a tour in Alaska. Great stress was evident on all sides on the features of P.O.M. Father Tom suggested that perhaps some thought could be given to the spiritual S.O.P. and he suggested a Three Day Retreat for all members of the Catholic faith in the Division, further that such ceremony take place in the last week of June in the Mission at Lompoc, which had been rehabilitated in recent years. While some 3,000 members of the Faith were initially expected to participate, it was found that only some 1200 could be accommodated in the Mission. On June 25 some 1200 Catholic members of the Thunderbolts marched solemnly across the rolling California hills towards the Mission. Half way the column was joined by a robed member of the Order operating the Mission who, holding high a Cross, led the procession to the Holy grounds where a century ago the Dons of early California had worshiped.

For two days, given to individual silence and meditation, the participants benefited from the rituals of the Retreat. A stout hearted Irish mess sergeant from the 42nd Tank Battalion with his kitchen crew assured all attendants adequate physical sustenance. Fathers of the Passionate Heart Order assured spiritual progress and sustenance to each individual. On the third day, with the Archbishop of Los Angeles officiating confirmation ceremonies took place. After the confirmation, the entire group was addressed by the Division Chaplain, Mr. Joe Scott, a noted orator of Eucharistic renown, General Kilburn and Archbishop Moncrief. A most appealing and inspiring sermon by the Passionate Father conducting the retreat terminated the ceremonies. The press as well as motion picture news agencies carried the details of the Retreat throughout the nation.

On August 15 the Division celebrated its second anniversary. Colonel Olson, G-1, and Major Knapp (Joseph A.) Division Special Service Officer organized and presented a most complete and elaborate series of activities. The day was highlighted in the evening when a notable array of Hollywood celebrities participated in an entertainment attended by a capacity crowd of the division.

By the first of August War Department plans for our movement overseas had definitely crystalized. The latest



in advanced weapons and equipment was being received daily, issued to appropriate units and carefully packed for shipment. Final details, prescribed by the official POM Manual, were being given constant attention.

One of the first orders received concerned the movement of an advance party to Elmira, New York, the Holding and Reconsignment point for the New York Port of Embarkation. The party was to consist of key members of the various services, Ordnance, Quartermaster, Signal, Medical and Engineers. Their function was to receive and check all equipment, principally combat vehicles completely equipped for combat, ear-marked for the 11th Armored Division. As a precautionary measure, the Division Commander elected to increase the party, as designated by higher headquarters, by a considerable number (35) of additional officers and assistants. This course of action proved most effective. The Division party at Elmira, operating on a 24 hour schedule, had soon identified our equipment to the last vehicle, and so reported to the Division Commander at Cooke.

Now occurred an untoward incident. The Thunderbolts were definitely scheduled to follow overseas the 10th Armored Division. At this time higher authority decided to transfer the 86th Infantry Division to Cooke. In order to economize on critical railroad facilities it was further decided to delay our movement until the arrival of rail equipment bearing elements of the 86th Division. As sea transport had been set up for the 11th AD, the War Department now issued instructions for the movement of the 12th Armored Division to New York in order to utilize the shipping already set up for the Thunderbolts. As the equipment for the 12th Armored had not yet arrived at Elmira, the next step was to issue the greater part of our equipment to them. It was this series of events which delayed our departure for England and resulted ultimately in our assignment to the VIII Corps where combat objectives were given frequently far remote from those appropriate to an Armored Division.

One incident arose at this time indicating a manner in which the best laid plans go astray. After our advance party reached Elmira, new tables of equipment were published authorizing two-way radio, transmitting as well as receiving, for all tanks. Heretofore only two tanks out of five in a platoon were so equipped. The value of such equipment was so obvious that the division commander spared no efforts in seeing that every Thunderbolt tank was so equipped. Contact with the party at Elmira assured all that such radio equipment would be secured. When our tank equipment was diverted to the 12th Armored this issue had to be re-initiated from scratch. Urgent messages were dispatched to Ground Forces to expedite delivery. On his way East the division commander stopped in Washington with a primary aim of securing

this radio equipment. Within 24 hours assurance was given that the extra radio sets would be delivered within the week at the NYPE. A timely check there later located the equipment in a box car at Cleveland, Ohio. Drastic messages succeeded in placing this valuable equipment in our hand in time to be loaded just prior to the departure of our convoy.

About the third of September our first business-like movement took place when our advance party, with personnel from every unit departed for the ETO under Colonel Holbrook. By the time the party reached New York, it was under Brigadier General Holbrook to the delight of the entire division. General Holbrook led his personnel aboard the HMS "Queen Mary" for the crossing. Aboard on the trip was a VIP in the person of the Honorable Winston Churchill, Prime Minister of Great Britain. Before landing in England, the top brass in the party had enjoyed luncheon as guests of the Prime Minister as well as prodigious liquid refreshments into the late afternoon. As our original overseas orders intended our landing on the beaches at Cherbourg, General Holbrook immediately departed from Southampton for that destination. As later explained, our advance party actually received us in Southern England.

By September 10 our movement toward Europe was well under way with our troop trains departing from Cooke as often as the units of the 86th Division unloaded. Insistence on immaculate kitchen cars on departure delayed briefly a few trains; however, when it was evident to Southern Pacific officials that we would not load until kitchen cars passed inspection, a little further delay was experienced.

The Division occupied Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, for final processing. Within a few days, statements of camp officials indicated that the Thunderbolts were unusually efficient in all processing details. Reports, likewise, indicated that troop trains arriving with units of the Division were the cleanest and best organized to reach Camp Kilmer over a considerable period. Arrangements were made to see that every member of the Division had an opportunity to see and visit the city of New York.

Just prior to sailing, General Kilburn held his final assembly of the division in this country. Four factors in the days ahead were stressed.

In all further opportunities for training, the strictest attention would be paid to assure that every available supporting weapon was utilized — Any weapon not firing was a weapon wasted. No hostile objective would be subdued with human blood and sacrifice when the same could be achieved by fire power — Let massed fires play their part. From the first action let the Germans realize that to snipe a Thunderbolt from the depths of any building



meant total destruction of that building. The Germans could either die or surrender, but once our units were within a town or village he could not snipe and live.

That with winter approaching, bad weather would be the normal situation. Therefore, every member of the Division was to expect the rigors of inclement and severe weather and be mentally and physically prepared for it. The wet rain of Southern England and the snow and sub-zero weather at Bastogne tested the mettle of the Division in these respects with normal effects on the tasks at hand. That no division would go into combat where its individual members nor its collective units were better prepared for eventualities nor with better prospects of valiant and effective action than the group of American soldiers in the present assembly.

On the afternoon of September 27 our advance parties left Camp Kilmer to board the ships on which the Division would sail. Colonel Bell had been designated Troop Commander aboard HMS "Samaria" and Colonel Lowe commander of troops aboard USS "Hermitage".

On the following day, September 28, in accordance with a rigid troop movement table, the remainder of the Division boarded trains at Camp Kilmer and transferring to ferries on the West Bank of the Hudson River was landed at piers adjacent to either the Samaria or Hermitage. With each man carrying every item of individual combat equipment, including weapons, only men in prime physical condition could have negotiated the steep and slippery gang planks onto the vessels. The gracious and patriotic women of the American Red Cross, ever present with our troops, were on hand with hot coffee and doughnuts which were enthusiastically accepted by all ranks.

By dark, the division was aboard with some 5,000 on the "Samaria" and some 4,800 on the "Hermitage". Late in the evening the Postmaster General came aboard the Samaria to bid his son-in-law, Captain Robert Ameno, 41st Tank Battalion, a last farewell and to bid "good-luck" to General Kilburn and Colonel J. J. B. Williams, Chief of Staff.

Shortly after midnight, in the early hours of September 29 we were headed for our rendezvous with the minions of Hitler. With daylight, we discovered that we were in a convoy of some 48 ships under a Commodore, U. S. Navy. The horizon disclosed a number of destroyers and corvettes busily occupied against enemy submarine threats. Within the 48 ship convoy it was understood that our combat equipment, including all vehicles and tanks, was complete and would be available to us almost immediately after debarkation. Such was not to prove to be the case.

On this first morning, the Master of the Samaria disclosed to the division commander that our destination was Cherbourg. With our advance party probably already

there the situation appeared most satisfactory. The first four days of our voyage followed a routing pattern with moderate weather and no signs of German submarines. On the fifth day our course swung to the southeast on a drastic tangent. The submarine warning system had disclosed a wolf pack concentrating along our previously charted course.

On the sixth day out of New York, Captain Bates of the "Samaria" informed General Kilburn that our destination had been changed to England. Later, it was advised that condition of the beaches near Cherbourg were no longer in shape to receive heavy combat loads such as tanks and heavy motors.

Late on the afternoon of October 10 the dim and misty shores of Southwestern England first appeared to curious eyes. At the same time it was announced that the "Samaria" would tie up at Liverpool while the Hermitage would unload at Southampton. By daylight October 11 the "Samaria" was anchored off Liverpool. By dark, General Kilburn and Colonel Williams with Captain Robert Neiman, Aide to General Kilburn, were over the side by Jacob's ladder and soon in Liverpool to check the details of unloading and concentrating the Division.

On the 12th of October the first units of the Division stepped ashore on British soil. News from General Holbrook disclosed that our advance party, less detachments, had returned and taken over our billets in Southern England. As units on the "Samaria" debarked under a schedule prepared by the Transportation Corps of the Liverpool Section, CZ, ETO, they entrained for travel to the south. At the same time a similar procedure was being followed for all units leaving the "Hermitage".

On this date, General Kilburn was handed three highly significant letters.

The first letter signed by Captain O. Bateman, Master HMS "Samaria" read in part, "I would like to express my admiration of the officers and men under your command, and also to add that in my opinion they are the best disciplined division it has been my honour to transport overseas." It may be stated here that Captain Bateman, for the greater part of the war, from 1939 through 1943, had been Vice Commander of HMS "Queen Mary"; he remarked that during the entire war he transported on vessels on which he served over one million troops of the Allied Forces, British, Canadians, Australians, Americans, etc.

The second letter signed by Colonel Grover C. Davis, Transport Commander, HMS "Samaria", read in part, "Your officers and men are the finest I have ever carried and you are to be congratulated as their leader."

The third letter was signed by Captain J. T. Talbert, U. S. Navy, commanding USS "Hermitage" and read in part,



"This ship has transported in the last two and one-half years a fair sized Army, and I can assure you that the personnel of your division, which it was our privilege to transport, were by far the best organized and most outstanding that the ship has ever carried."

At nightfall, October 13 the Division was again concentrated in the training areas of Southern England.

While the area and billets assigned the Division were satisfactory from the viewpoint of shelter, they were entirely unsatisfactory from a training angle. The area was roughly 60 miles from north to south and some 40 miles from east to west. Measures were instituted without delay to improve the situation. The need for more adequate training areas than were now provided became more acute when it was found that only a portion of our equipment had arrived with our convoy. It was evident, therefore, that with late arrival of training and combat equipment the time element might prove a serious factor in our readiness for combat. Accordingly, every argument was presented London and the British Billeting Committee to afford better and more ample facilities. By the middle of November, the Division had been regrouped at the expense of time and a burden on units involved but with justifiable results.

Knowing that late receipt of equipment might result in a mental let-down, the division commander specified that during the period October 15-November 15 every member of the Division would be afforded an opportunity of visiting London. With the outstanding caliber of our personnel, such education advantages were matters of obvious recognition. Prior to our departure for the Continent in December, the greater number of our men had seen practically all points of historic interest in Southern England. Realizing that our equipment could not catch us for a considerable period, request was made and authority issued for a series of groups from the Division to visit the front. These groups extended down to battalion commanders and their key staff officers. By prearrangement, different groups went to various parts of the front, with the result that by early December, we had a comprehensive picture of the different tactical problems and counter-measures existing among all American Corps and especially armored divisions.

In addition to the 11th AD in the south of England we found on our arrival the 12th Armored Division occupying Tuthall Barracks. This establishment had been designed and constructed primarily to provide the requirements of an Armored Division. Here again, the delay in our movement overseas proved a burden to the division. The 12th Armored moved to the Continent about the middle of November and within a short time the Commander had requested, by name, the assignment of the 11th

AD. Being only partially equipped at that time the foregoing request could not be met by SHAEF.

During our stay in England the Division received a number of distinguished visitors. Perhaps one of the most illustrious was Lieutenant General Sir Hugh Elles who commanded the Southern Region in the British Administrative Command. General Elles had the distinction of commanding the first tank action in modern annals when he took the First Tank Brigade into the attack at Cambrai. Sir Hugh was most generous in his comments on the personnel and activities of the division on his departure. In early November General Brooks had requested the services of Lieutenant Colonel Paul Chalmers G-3, as Deputy Chief of Staff, VI Corps. This meant a promotion to the grade of Colonel for "Black Jack" so that no objection was interposed on his projected reassignment.

To replace Chalmers, Lieutenant Colonel Spelman Downer, Executive Officer, CC A, was brought up to Division Headquarters. After much discussion and consideration Lieutenant Colonel Theodore Bilbo, Jr., C.O., 490 Field Artillery, was relieved of his command assignment and replaced Downer as Executive Officer CC A. The command of the 490 F. A. diverted to Lieutenant Colonel Harold H. Davit, Jr., who commanded that unit brilliantly in action in the same fashion as did Ray Lumry and Louis Alt with the 491st and 492nd, respectively.

By the end of November, the Division was once more in possession of practically all combat equipment, although a slight shortage in radio sets existed for an additional 10 days. Opportunities had been provided for every unit to fire all weapons newly received, including the artillery 105's and the 76mm Tanks. The first week in December found us ready for any eventuality.

News of the next move was not long delayed. By December 3 advance orders directed preparations for a move to ETO. An advance party, again under General Holbrook, was dispatched to Southampton. The first echelons of the division were to move on December 10. The division commander was advised, confidentially, that our destination would be Liege, Belgium, for duty with the First Army. By December 12, over half of the division was in movement. That evening an urgent message from Captain William D. Marland, CC A, liaison officer for the Division at Cherbourg, was received by General Kilburn. The message was to the effect that drastic changes in our orders had been issued; that the situation was such as to warrant General Kilburn awaiting the arrival of Captain Marland in England. The following day, General Kilburn traveled to London and found that the division was now slated to proceed to Chateau Briand to relieve the 94th Infantry Division and assume the containment mission against German forces in St. Nazaire and Lorient. Steps were taken immediately to divert our advance party from



LeHavre to Cherbourg. General Kilburn, that day (13th) flew to Cherbourg and on December 14 arrived at Chateau Briand to initiate action in relieving the 94th Division.

General Holbrook succeeded in promptly swinging his advance party to Cherbourg, although a few unit detachments were still missing at LeHavre, their LST having failed to show up. By December 18, several battalions of the division had landed at Cherbourg, had combat loaded with ammunition under severe conditions at ammunition dumps now located in knee-deep mud, and were enroute south towards Rennes. Colonel Virgil Bell was utilizing his accustomed drive and energy in moving the remainder of the Division out of Southampton, although a considerable portion, especially the service contingents, was still in their billets in England.

At dusk on December 16, faint bits of news reached Chateau Briand of a formidable German counter-offensive somewhere on the front of the Twelfth Army Group. In the meantime the majority of the division staff had reached the new Command Post and all hands were busy in the final features of the plans to relieve the 94th. On the following day our plans for containing St. Nazaire and Lorient were complete. Assignments to each combat command had been developed and the location and make-up of Colonel Bell's Reserve Command were confirmed.

The news from the front was ominous—the Germans had penetrated American lines to a depth of 35 miles. General Maloney (94th) and Kilburn held hourly conferences. In the afternoon, General Kilburn motored to Rennes to look over the 21st Armored Infantry under Hoffman, the 55th Armored Infantry under Hearn and the 490 F.A. under Davitt, all having arrived at that point under the control of CC B and Colonel Yale. To check last minute details with the Brittany Base Section, in Rennes, General Kilburn visited that headquarters and was handed this message: "Suspend all movement 11th Armored Division in place and await further orders—Signed Lee." The message was paraphrased to Holbrook at Cherbourg with instructions to get word to Bell at Southampton.

The discussions within the staff went on far into the night. On the morning of December 19, word reached Division Headquarters that the 11th Armored Division would move as promptly as possible on three routes to the vicinity of Reims in SHAEF Reserve. The Zone of Communications under Lieutenant General John C. H. (Courthouse) Lee required all of the 19th to develop routes of march, gasoline supply, etc.

The Thunderbolts headed East at daylight of December 20. Yale led the group now in bivouac at Rennes. Holbrook started CC A and those units waiting at Cherbourg. Bell put the heat on loading the last of our units out of England. Six hundred miles away by circuitous routes marked

with temporary bridges lay the first march objective in Europe.

General Kilburn accompanied by Colonel Williams and Captain Neiman headed for Paris. With the mud and muck of winter ahead it was imperative that our new tanks be equipped with "track extensions" before our first action; the best source of supply was Paris. Within 48 hours, 8000 pounds of medium tank track extensions were on the way to Soissons for installation on our tanks. Just how much these accessories were to benefit many of our tank crews during those first bloody days at Bastogne may be questionable; yet there is satisfaction in the knowledge that no effort ever was spared in the Division to secure every possible advantage for its members by every staff and command echelon.

At a visit to SHAEF on December 22, the division commander was advised in an informal manner that, perchance, the 11th Armored Division might prove to be the lone remaining combat element between the advancing Germans under Von Ronstedt and the Atlantic Ocean. That afternoon, having been preceded by Colonel Williams, General Kilburn headed for Reims. Arrival there found General Lee and his Reims commander in a rather portentous conference discussing the adequate defense of the Meuse River. The knowledge that the Thunderbolts were concentrating on Reims dispelled materially the heavy atmosphere of anxiety. (Note: With the remaining elements of the Division still moving out of England, the wheels and tracks of our march columns continued their grind over the roads of France. In the meantime General Kilburn had been placed in charge of all defenses along the Meuse River from Verdun to Givet, some 160 miles. A large portion of the Division Staff was assembled at Charlerois coordinating this mission. In fact CC A had been ordered bivouacs north of that city for use as a mobile reserve. Together with three battalions of French Resistance Forces, CC A, on arrival was to push reconnaissance elements well to the east of the river.

Christmas Day 1944 found the Division still moving on the Reims area with the Division Commander and Staff engaged in a mission remote from close contact with our own elements. During the day, great fleets of C-47's (Cargo Planes) soared over Charlerois headed for the embattled forces at Bastogne to drop desperately needed supplies. The spirit of Christmas was not with us, but the situation of other men caught in the merciless pressure of the Bulge made our position enviable by comparison. On the following day, the 26th, a message to this effect was phoned to General Kilburn from both SHAEF and General Bradley's Twelfth Army Group, "Your friends to the north may give a party. It may be a large affair, but only a part of your family is invited to participate in some phases of it"—Transcribed, "The British forces to your

Action in the Bulge



Tank being touched up near Bastogne



Technician Fifth Grade Harold Hinsbillwood and Technician Fourth Grade Ray Bidwell in an artillery dugout take time off from the war to enjoy their mail.



Corporal Daniel J. Curtin, Battery B of the 491st Armored Field Artillery Battalion, sets up and uses an aiming circle.

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Abandoned German material near Houffalize.



Special mobile dental unit attached to the 11th A.D. doing business.



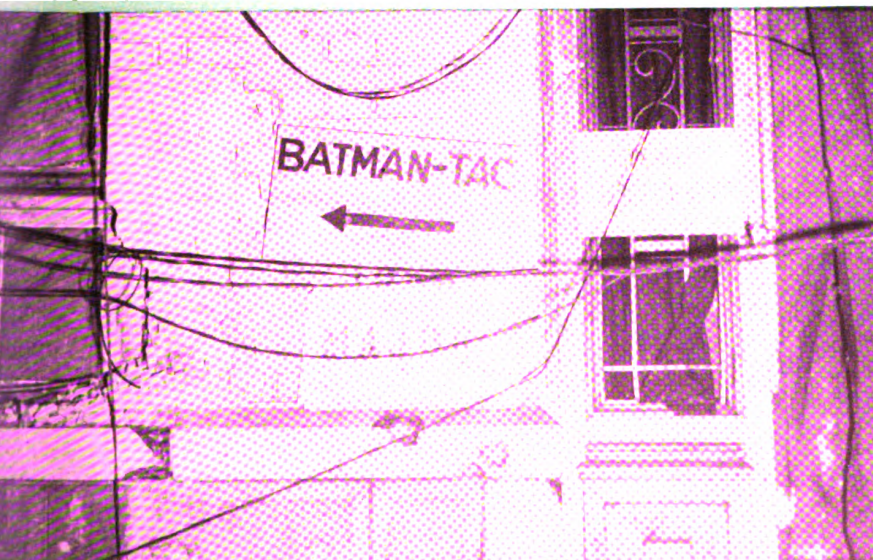
Street corner in Bastogne.



The roads were a sheet of ice.



Part of the 41st Tank Battalion award ceremony.

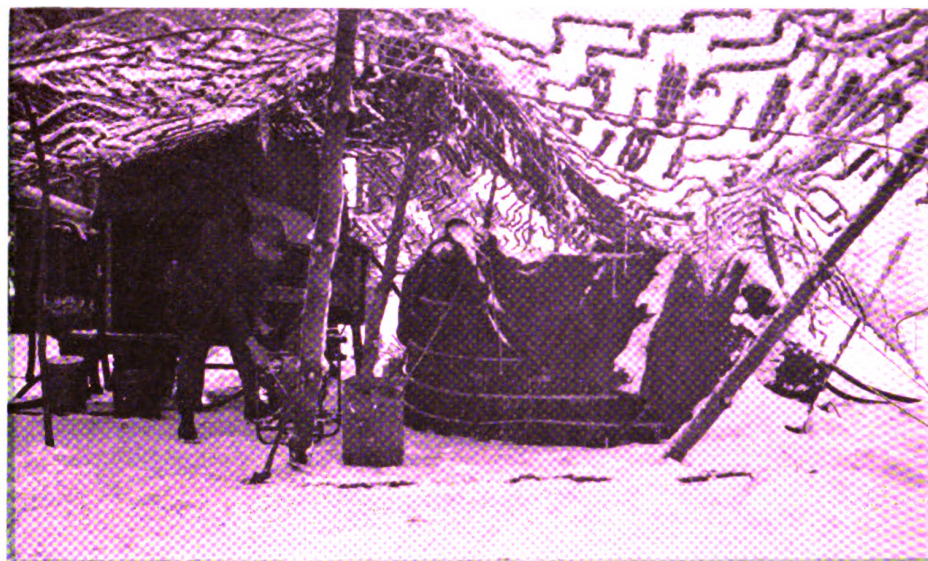


Batman TAC sign in Bastogne





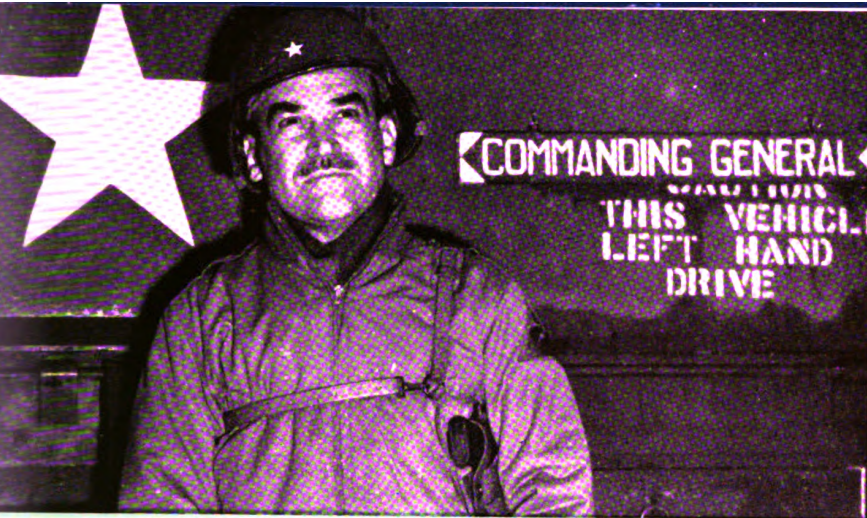
Street scene in Bastogne.



Camouflaged with nets

Headquarters Commandant gives the Headquarters barber a haircut near Bastogne, Belgium.





Division commander, Brigadier General Charles S. Kilburn.



The artillery in the bulge



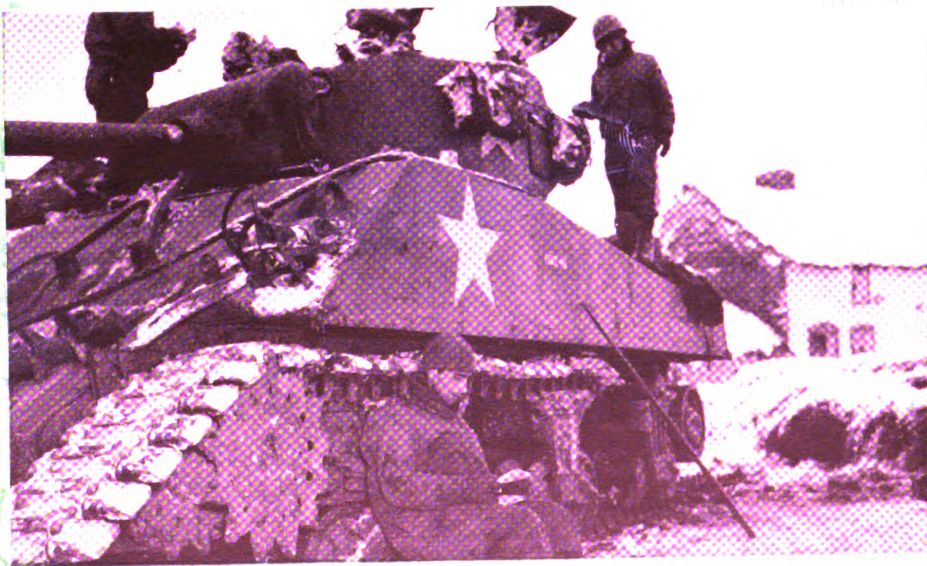
German soldiers double-time to surrender themselves to 11th Armored Division troops.

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Socks were never dry long.



Tracks were hard to maintain in the sub-zero weather



The mail came through even in the Bulge.



It took thousands of gallons of gas to keep us rolling.



Cow Hounds.



Chaplain Karl A. Olsson.





General Kilburn congratulates Lieutenant Foote following award ceremony.



K - Rations



A near bad accident.



north may execute an attack; their attack to be reinforced by certain elements of the 11th A.D."

In accord with the foregoing message, word was received from the VIII Corps requesting the Division Commander to join in a reconnaissance with staff members of the Corps for assembly areas near Givet. General Kilburn with Lieutenant Colonel Downer, G-3, and General Holbrook and Staff spent the greater part of the day on this purpose. On returning to Charlerois late in the afternoon, it was found that the 17th Airborne Division had arrived in such force as to enable them to assume the defense of the Meuse. Our staff lost no time in departing for the Division C.P. which had been installed in a French manor house some distance northeast of Reims. The assembled staff on the evening of the 27th was a welcome sight to General Kilburn who had been out of direct contact with the division since the 13th of the month. It was this night that the news was announced that the last of our units had closed in their assigned bivouacs at two o'clock that morning.

The first event on the morning of the 28th was a meeting of all unit commanders and staffs at the Division CP. Without delay the combat groupments of the combat commands and reserve command were designated with the directive that liaison agents would report at once to appropriate headquarters. Likewise the immediate preparation of an operating signal annex and other features of a SOP character, incident to our current situation were directed for early distribution. The remainder of the daylight hours were given to checks of supply matters to assure adequate issues of ammunition, gasoline, etc. A liaison officer already had been dispatched to the VIII Corps. (Captain Emmett Keough). The wide dispersion of the division, with CC A north of Charlerois, gave some concern.

At 8:30 p.m. (28th) the Division Commander's phone rang with the Chief of Staff, VIII Corps, on the other end. General Kilburn repeated this message, "Alert your division to march—Have the Signal Officer copy this coded message." To prepare the issue of orders and assure distribution down to subordinate units with a division requires six hours by all acceptable standards in Army circles. With some impatience the decoding of the message given to the Signal Officer, was awaited. When clarified, the Division had received orders to move without delay to assembly areas southwest of the beleaguered town of Bastogne. The only feasible route lay through Sedan with a one-way bridge on the Meuse River at that point. Within an hour, march orders had been prepared and issued to the major commands. By 1:00 a.m., December 29, CC A was in movement. Midnight of that day was to find the 11th A.D., with a march depth in single column of over 50 miles, beyond a one-way bridge and closed in bivouac some 96 miles to the east. Only a highly efficient, well organized, disciplined division could have accomplished that feat.

The Division CP was established at Neufchateau. Enroute to that point, General Kilburn visited Headquarters VIII Corps. There the proposed plan of attack of the Thunderbolts, to relieve besieged Bastogne, was discussed. The Division was to attack at daylight, December 30 (The next morning). It was noted that the plan specified an attack by one combat command to the east and the other to the west of a heavily wooded area; a situation which precluded any possible mutual support between these two major elements. This feature was protested by the Division Commander as dangerous to the welfare of our units as well as futile towards decisive results. This protest was over-ruled on the basis that the 87th Infantry Division would attack on our left and being a green division should be supported by the availability of armor. The 11th A.D., also, was to taste combat for the first time. The plan as outlined, however, was to prevail—at a cost.

At 4:00 p.m. General Holbrook and Colonel Yale reported to the Division CP. Both had been in contact with the 6th Cavalry Group which was in contact with German Forces in the area in which we were to launch our attack. In so far as could be ascertained, two German Panzer Divisions held ground which we must secure. (Soon identified as the 3rd Panzer Grenadier and 15th Panzer Grenadier Divisions). In addition the Reimer Brigade (an armored unit commanded by a Brigadier named Reimer who, previously had been chief of Hitler's personal bodyguard. A brigade comprising selected personnel of the most flagrant type of young and brutal Nazi. Comparing tables of equipment, the German forces opposing us were potentially far stronger in tanks than ourselves. The proposed plan of attack was discussed and instructions given for the combat commanders to conduct final reconnaissance in view of the attack orders anticipated. A concluding assembly of unit commanders would be held at 9:30 p.m. when the formal orders for the attack would be issued.

In the meantime the never ending stream of vehicles continued to flow through Neufchateau on their way to final assembly positions and their rendezvous with destiny and the German. Dusk fell and gave way to a clear, cloudless sky in which glowed a brilliant full moon. The sound of airplanes announced the strafing of our columns by small flights of Messerschmidts. Alert driving together with the effective actions of our 575th AAA Auto Weapons Battalion resulted in negligible casualties. Later the 575th was to draw first enemy blood when their guns knocked down a lone German fighter who attempted to rake the Division CP. The kitchen crew of Division Headquarters Mess brought in the first German prisoner when the wounded aviator landed by parachute close to their culinary operations. While after midnight, the mess crew, always alert ones, were on the job and pounced on the Heine the moment he struck the ground.



The formal written Corps Orders, for the attack, were delivered by Keough at dark and the provisions of the Division attack for the following morning were complete by 9:30 p.m. when the major unit commanders assembled in the caravan of the Division Commander. The widely divergent maneuver by our two combat commands, previously specified by Corps, still held. Details for the coordination of supporting artillery fires, particularly for the supporting role of Corps Artillery, were anything but clear and specific. Air-ground liaison groups of the 9th Tactical Air Force operating under the Third Army had yet to appear. Information of the hostile situation in our zone of action provided by the 6th Cavalry Group was, to the Division Commander, of a hazy and indefinite nature.

As to be proven during the five ensuing days, as now described by Robert E. Merriam in the book "Dark December", the division was to contribute hugely to the decisive Battle of the Bulge. Its gallant and impetuous assault to assure American retention of the vital road-center of Bastogne was to result in the destruction of a great part of Von Ronstedt's hordes which otherwise, on withdrawal to the East, would have manned later the Siegfried Line. As was declared afterwards by the VIII Corps Commander, the Thunderbolts saved that critical area and the attendant travail and confusion which would have prevailed had it fallen to the now desperate Germans.

By 10:30 p.m., the major unit commanders had received their orders, discussed last minute details and departed. Within a dozen hours the Division was to have tasted the rigors and the cost of modern war. The stakes were high but irrespective of cost the Division had that fiber and that caliber to meet, head on, the severest crisis of its history. We were to join that Holy fraternity who, throughout American annals, have been launched into the throes of major battle in their first engagement. Outnumbered in tanks, out-gunned in tank cannon, operating in tricky tank terrain, we were to force two crack Panzer Divisions and a picked armored brigade of the vaunted German legions to surrender over six miles of key ground. Our junction with the intrepid 101st Airborne Division assisted materially in cracking the back of the Bulge.

Only a disciplined, trained division, high in esprit and pride, with complete confidence in every member could have boasted this magnificent achievement. When the harsh winds of winter and the mild zephyrs of Spring flow over the graves of those valiant men of the division whom we left under European soil, one may distinguish, faintly but exaltedly, the undaunted refrain—"We were Thunderbolts".



ACTION BEGINS





MISSION accomplished was the word among 11th Armored Division soldiers at midnight on May 8, 1945. The war in Europe was officially over and the Germans had surrendered to the Allied Armies unconditionally.

After four months and 10 days of actual combat with the enemy, the 11th Armored Division on May 9, 1945, had established a reputation for itself equal to any combat unit in the American Army. During its period in combat the Division had captured 76,229 prisoners, nearly twice as many as were taken by the entire United States Army in World War I. This figure does not include the 10,000 prisoners turned over to the supporting infantry divisions for evacuation or 34,125 German troops who violated surrender terms by fleeing from the Red Army. These troops were rounded up and turned over to the Soviet forces.

On this May day soldiers of the Division looked back over three major campaigns and hundreds of bloody miles. They had come along way since that early morning attack on December 30, 1944, that started the 11th Armored Division along the way to fame and glory over the time worn battlefields of France and Germany.

Adventure for the 11th Armored Division really started at the time the Division was hurried across the Channel to Cherbourg. The advance party, composed of the Headquarters and Headquarters Company of CCA, had left for La Havre with orders to prepare the Division to take over the sector held by the 94th Division at Lorient where they were containing about 100,000 German troops. However, they had hardly gotten to Chateau Briand before the orders were changed to move the Division to Sissons. Consequently they were rushed back to Cherbourg where the first LST's were arriving. These troops were staged immediately, ammunition was issued and within 24 hours they started to roll on the 450 mile trip which was to take them into contact with the onrushing Germans as they broke out of the Bulge.

Christmas day found the Division partially assembled in Sissons. An improvised task force under General "Hunk" Holbrook made up of parts of the headquarters of Division Trains, 41st Cavalry, 63rd Armored Infantry Battalion, 42nd Tanks, and CCR. These were rushed to the Meuse with orders to secure the crossing from Givet to Sedan. But this was only temporary. The 17th Airborne Division arrived the next day thereby releasing the 11th A.D. Immediately orders arrived to proceed to Neufchateau without delay. Midnight of December 28-29 saw the division marching in the brightest moonlight imaginable reflected on the light snow covered fields. By evening the troops were in their positions. Tomorrow was to be the real thing. This was it.

Combat Command A under the command of Brigadier General Willard A. Holbrook, Jr., led the 11th Armored

Division in its first attack at 7:30 a.m. on December 30, 1944. This combat command passed through elements of the 6th Cavalry Group, jumped off at 7:30 a.m., and made first contact with the enemy South of Remagne, Belgium, at the officially recorded time of 8:22 a.m.

As this first attack progressed the two task forces of Combat Command A developed strongpoints in Remagne and along the South edge of a small woods just one kilometer to the East. Limited by streams and large thickly wooded areas, the possibilities of maneuver were reduced.

Small arms, mortar, artillery and heavy anti-tank fire halted further progress by the Command. The Infantry Task Force dug in along the ridge about one kilometer South of Remagne and the tank elements withdrew to full defilade positions. The 11th Armored Division was now engaged in hard, tough and bloody warfare against a determined enemy.

On this same morning of December 30, 1944, Combat Command B under the command of Colonel Wesley W. Yale, a Cavalryman, was organized into three task forces and readied for the attack. The infantry force of this unit made first contact with the enemy North of Jodenville, Germany, at 9:30 a.m. It had run headlong into the 15th Panzer Division attack, which was trying to sever the Bastogne - Neufchateau Highway. When this happened the Germans decided to stabilize, establishing well chosen positions from which they lashed out repeatedly with tank-infantry counterattacks. The enemy efforts were supported by 75mm artillery, heavy mortar, and nebelwerfer fire.

In the meantime, the tank task force of Combat Command B successfully attacked Lavaselle, taking a number of prisoners, and continued North to higher ground near Brul and Houmont.

During the afternoon of December 30, the infantry force of CC B attacked Chenogne, but was driven off. This village, in a defiladed pocket just South of the Bois De Valets, was a heavily infantry defended Artillery and anti-tank gun position.

The reserve task force of CC B was not committed to action this first day of combat. Through the night the Command held positions while undergoing heavy German artillery fire at Houmont and Jodenville. During the same night the Combat Command CP moved forward to Copon.

About 1 p.m. on December 30, a squadron of P-47s strafed observed enemy vehicles and troops on the West flank at Geriment. To assist the Combat Command B attack on Chenogne another squadron bombed and strafed enemy installations in the town about two hours later.

Following Combat Command A the Reserve Command under the command of Colonel Virgil Bell, an infantryman, moved to Respelle. The 41st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron was then shifted to the vicinity of Bougnimont



for protection of the Division's left flank until the 87th Infantry Division came abreast. Later in the day Reserve Command was assembled more centrally in the vicinity of Vaux Lez Rosieres.

This first day of combat found the Division Artillery units supporting the advance and reconnoitering for forward positions.

Coordination of plans and establishment of boundaries was arranged with the 101st Airborne Division and Combat Command A of the 9th Armored Division through a G-3, operations, staff visit during the afternoon.

Toward the end of this first day of combat it became apparent that the infantry fight confronting Combat Command A and the wide dispersal of forces was seriously crippling the attack. An immediate request was dispatched to Corps headquarters asking that a shift be made in the western boundary to exclude Remagne. The request was approved and orders were issued to concentrate troops at the head of the Rechrival Valley. Screened by the 41st Cavalry, Combat Command A was ordered to withdraw from positions South of Ramagne and move to the vicinity of Morhet. The Reserve Command was to move to Magerotte and Division Artillery to positions along the road South to Morhet.

By now the enemy was incorporating sniper action and infiltration tactics into his offensive defense. The hours of dusk on December 30, found him back on terrain yielded during the day.

At the end of the first day of the Division's fighting it found from confirmation by German prisoners that it was facing the German 3rd Panzer Division, the 15th Panzer Division, and the Remer Brigade.

Towards midnight orders were received to renew the attack early the next morning, December 31, 1944.

Plans for the second day called for a concentration of forces at the head of the Rechrival Valley during the hours of darkness, and an early morning attack of mutually supporting Combat Commands. To Reserve Command was assigned the task of shoring up the Division West flank by an attack from Magerotte Northwest to secure the ground Southwest of Pinsamont. Combat Command B was charged with the job of attacking along the East side of the Valley, reducing Chenogne, securing the commanding terrain contained in the Bois De Valets, and continuing the Eastward blocking action by taking Mande St. Etienne. With both flanks thus secured, Combat Command A was to attack down the center of the valley from Morhet through Rechrival and Hubermont to Flamierge. Division Artillery was assigned a general support mission. Until relieved by elements of the 87th Infantry Division, the 41st Cavalry was to hold the high ground South of Remagne. After being relieved the 41st Cavalry was to protect the Division's West flank along the Bois Des Haies De Magery. Thus the stage was set for the second day of action.

Shortly after midnight the 41st Cavalry moved into its screening position. Intense cold, icy roads, and involvement with units of the 6th Armored Division moving in the same direction along the Bastogne-Neufchateau Highway seriously hampered the regroupment of all forces, particularly those of Combat Command A and the division Artillery.

Reserve Command launched its attack at 9 a.m. and by 10:30 a.m. had advanced to a ridge two kilometers Northwest of Magerotte. By 4:30 p.m. Reserve Command was on its objective and had fought in the towns of Agul and Pinsamont, capturing 38 prisoners along the way. Because of heavy enemy mortar and artillery fire, a withdrawal was ordered to the high ground South of Pinsamont where the Reserve Command dug in. A counterattack at 6:30 p.m. was repulsed. The Reserve Command CP was established at Magerotte.

At 12:00 Noon CC B, following an artillery preparation assisted by fire from its tank task force, sent its infantry task force into Chenogne against enemy mortar, small arms, and anti-tank fire. The infantry succeeded in taking part of Chenogne, but by dark the town had not been completely mopped up. On order, Command B withdrew to the high ground South of Chenogne and outposted ground gained for the night. The Germans, under cover of darkness, patched up the damage as best they could in Chenogne and bolstered its defenses with a resupply of two infantry companies. The relinquishment of this town did not fit in with the enemy's plans which were, of necessity, now assuming a defensive aspect.

Combat Command A's tank force jumped off at 3:10 p.m., followed by an infantry task force, and progressed to a point just South and East of Rechrival where they were halted by heavy anti-tank and artillery fire. Beating off a counterattack at 6:30 p.m., positions were consolidated by Command A for the night.

Under the revised attack all artillery was placed directly under the Division Artillery Commander and moved to support positions along the road South of Morhet. The 490th Armored Field Artillery Battalion was placed in direct support of Command A; the 491st Armored Field Artillery Battalion in direct support of Command B; and the remaining organic as well as attached artillery in general support.

The enemy employed mines along the shoulders of roads, fringes of woods, and numerous defiles existing in the frozen and snow covered terrain. But, the vigorous employment of artillery, mortars, tanks, and concentrated small arms dispelled any conclusions as to the enemy's intention to withdrawal.

Prompted by this dogged enemy resistance, a redefinition of successive objectives for the major units, a closer tie-in or massed artillery fires, concentration of effort on the reduction of the Bois De Valets stronghold North of Chenogne, and closer coordination of action between all Division and adjacent unit major commands was directed.



Combat Command A was assigned Hubermont, Flamierge, Givroulle, and Bertogne as successive objectives, and was available to support Combat Command B as required. The Division main effort was shifted to the East flank and charged to Combat Command B. After the capture of Chenogne, in coordination with Combat Command A of the 9th Armored Division, Combat Command B was to assault and clear the key Bois De Valets; following through to Mande St. Etienne, Flamizoulle, and Longchamps. Reserve Command was to continue its west flank protection, being assigned Pinsamont, Macravivier, and Salle as successive objectives.

A thorough and extensive scheme of harassing and interdiction fires was planned by Division Artillery, with particular attention to the enemy main supply route from Givroulle to Salle. Supporting Command B's main effort, all available fire was to be used in powerful massed preparations on Chenogne, the high open area South of Bois De Valets, and Bois De Valets itself.

The possibility of deep enemy flanking action through Bois Des Haies De Magery on the West was counteracted by the continued assignment of the 41st Cavalry to patrol and road blocking activities in this area.

NEW YEAR'S DAY 1945

New Year's Day, 1945, found Combat Command B launching a coordinated attack at 8:30 a.m. on Chenogne. The infantry task force attacking from the South was supported by massed tank and artillery fire. By Noon the town was securely in Command B hands. The tank task force followed up from the vicinity of Houmont, reducing all enemy opposition in the woods Northwest of Chenogne, and rejoining the infantry task force. Reorganized, the Command then launched its full power Northeast toward the Bois Des Valets stronghold. The tank task force led the attack followed closely by the infantry. The reserve tanks remained in position near Chenogne. Following the massed artillery preparation of 13 artillery battalions,

Command B forces entered the Bois Des Valets and reduced all remnants of enemy opposition. The Command then dug in for the night in a position overlooking Mande St. Etienne from the North edge of the Bois Des Valets. Mande St. Etienne at this time was being held by the Germans with about 200 infantrymen, 18 Mark IV tanks, artillery, anti-tank guns, and nebelwerfers.

With the fall of Chenogne assured, Combat Command A jumped off at 12:00 Noon in an attack on the heavily defended Hubermont-Millomont-Rechimont areas. The leading tank force made some progress but was shortly slowed by a heavy German infantry and armor counterattack from the Northwest tip of the Bois Des Valets. Air support, artillery and tank fire stopped the counterattack with huge losses to the enemy, however, the Command had to reorganize before continuing. After reorganization the

Command, once more in column formation, tanks leading, launched an attack at 3:00 p.m. directly North down the valley towards Hubermont. The edge of the town was reached just before dark, but forces were withdrawn to consolidate on high ground East of Rechrival for the night.

Dug in for the night Combat Command A troops held their positions under heavy German fire.

During this time the Reserve Command continued the defense of the Division's left and maintained neutralizing fire on towns to the North and Northwest. A counterattack was dispersed at 11:00 p.m. Units of the 56th Armored Engineer Battalion were kept busy defending a roadblock in the Bois Des Haies De Magery and clearing booby traps and mines from the area.

PRECEDING THE ATTACK

Reinforced by artillery of the 4th and 9th Armored Divisions and the 101st Airborne Division, the Division Artillery massed fires on the Division East flank in powerful support of Combat Command B's operations. Preparations were fired for both Command A and B attacks. Preceding the attack of Command B into the Bois Des Valets, the massed fires of 13 battalions raised havoc with this strongly held key enemy position. Division Artillery alone, during the day, fired some 6,000 rounds. Later, the 491st Armored Field Artillery Battalion displaced forward to Flohamont.

Favorable weather and VIII Corps interest gave the Division five squadron air missions during the day. In connection with the Combat Command B attack on Chenogne, enemy troops and vehicles in the Bois Des Valets and North were bombed and strafed. Also, troops and vehicles in the vicinity of Bertogne were bombed and strafed by American planes at 9:35 a.m. An enemy armor and infantry counterattack against Combat Command A was disorganized and delayed by two air squadron attacks



Moving toward Bastogne



shortly after noon in the Renuamont and Flamierge areas. To assist the late afternoon attack of Command A, one air squadron bombed and strafed enemy tanks and troops in Hubermont.

The 41st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron moved its command post to Magerotte on January 1, 1945, and elements of the Squadron maintained outposts and road-blocks along the West flank of the Division. To facilitate contact with major units, a Division advance CP was established late in the afternoon at the Railroad Station along the road one mile South of Morhet.

The seizure of the key terrain on which Combat Command B ended its operations for the day definitely doomed to failure the strong German effort to seal off, for the second time, the vital Bastogne-Neufchateau highway. However, personnel and materiel casualties were mounting at a rapid rate, the continuous exposure of men to the bitter cold began to tell; and the desperate German defense of their one main supply road South of the L'Ourthe river continued.

ADVANCE TO MORHET

Around 8:30 p.m. the VIII Corps commander visited the advance CP Southeast of Morhet and made an appraisal of the Current situation. He then directed a consolidation and defense of ground gained for the following day.

Following the Corps commander's order, all major unit commanders in the Division were assembled at 10:00 p.m., assigned sectors of responsibility for clean up and defense, and directed to reorganize their commands for further offensive action.

On the fourth day of combat for the Division, January 2, 1945. Combat Command A tank elements were withdrawn from forward positions East of Rechrival to mobile reserve. The infantry was employed to defend positions along the Command front. The command post was moved to Morhet. The Reserve Command continued defense of the Division left flank, maintaining contact with the 87th Infantry Division and Combat Command A.

At the instigation of the commander, and in order to complete action which would pinch out the severely mauled Combat Command A of the 9th Armored Division, an attack to capture Mande St. Etienne and join forces with the 101st Airborne Division was worked out by Combat Command B. This operation was cleared with Corps and at 3:00 p.m., and again supported by powerful massed artillery, Combat Command B launched an attack on Mande St. Etienne. The town was captured by a right flank enveloping movement by infantry while the tanks supported the attack by fire and later joined in the clearance of the town proper. A tough counterattack, in which the enemy utilized practically all component ground arms. including nebelwerfers, was repulsed at 10:45 p.m.

Division Artillery was again reinforced by eight additional battalions of artillery in supporting Combat Command B's

attack on Mande St. Etienne. In this attack 3,800 rounds were fired on 120 targets. Harassing and interdiction fires, as well as continual defensive missions, assisted other major units in holding their positions.

Information was received on January 2, 1945, that the 17th Airborne Division was enroute and would relieve the Division in place the following day. Division Headquarters moved to Vaux Les Rosieres and the advance CP was closed and rejoined Division Headquarters at 2:30 p.m. Later in the day a Corps Field Order arrived prescribing a successive relief from right to left, upon which the 11th Armored Division was to assemble in Corps Reserve.

Division Artillery was directed to remain in place and support the 17th Airborne Division. On occupation of the concentration area, the Division was ordered to prepare to assist the attack of the 87th Infantry and the 17th Airborne Divisions or to block hostile counterattacks from the North or Northwest.

ENEMY COLUMN SIGHTED

An enemy column about two hours long containing some armor was reported at 10:30 p.m. moving Southwest on Highway 26 toward Bertogne.

The Corps commander visited the Division CP at 10:30 a.m. on January 3, 1945, to check the progress of the relief and counterattack support plans.

In the early afternoon of January 3, Combat Command B, being the right flank unit of the Division was the first to be relieved. The Command was assembled and moved to its concentration area Southwest of Bercheux, closing during the night. The command post was established at Bercheux.

Patrols maintained contact with the enemy in the vicinity of Hubermont until the relief of Combat Command A by



Lt. Colonel Bilbo of the 490th Field checks a range finder



Sad sack had a rougher time

the 17th Airborne Division was effected at 3:00 p.m. Command A withdrew to a supporting position in rear of the 17th Airborne Division right flank, assembling its units in the vicinity of and establishing its CP at Sibret. About 4:00 p.m. the Reserve Command was relieved in place by units of the 17th Division. The Command was withdrawn to the vicinity of Magerotte where the CP was set up. Roadblocks and patrols were maintained in the Bois Des Haies De Magery.

To cover the relief of the Division by the 17th Airborne Division 3,700 rounds were fired by Division Artillery in harassing fire.

In preparation for possible future employment of the Division, the 56th Armored Engineer Battalion, which was released from the Reserve Command, initiated reconnaissance of routes to the Northwest and Northeast in the general area Neufchateau-Libramont-St. Hubert-Bastogne. The 22nd Tank Battalion (Companies A and D) was attached to the 17th Airborne Division for operational control to stiffen key positions in anticipation of further enemy armored counterattacks.

BAPTISM OF FIRE

In five freezing days the Thunderbolt Division had tackled two ace German divisions, punched them back six miles, cleared 30 square miles of rugged terrain, liberated more than a dozen towns, and ended the threat to the supply route. The Division had suffered heavy casualties in its baptism of fire, but had earned its spurs with honors.

From January 4 to 11, 1945, the 11th Armored Division, minus Division Artillery, was in Corps Reserve. During this time rehabilitation of personnel, reorganization, and maintenance of materiel was stressed. The Division was also placed on an alert status to render support to the 87th Infantry and the 17th and 101st Airborne Divisions should they need it.

Under the skillful command of Brigadier General Charles S. Kilburn, the 11th Armored Division during the first five days of combat accounted for an estimated 769 Germans wounded and killed in action plus a verified 411 prisoners. The Division's losses during the five day period amounted to 184 soldiers killed in action and 441 wounded. German forces had definitely gotten the short end in their efforts against the Thunderbolts.

Orders were received on January 12, 1945, in which a combined attack of all Corps units was ordered for January 13. The attack plan, as far as the 11th Armored Division was concerned, called for the employment of Combat Command A and the Reserve Command in column, supported by the full weight of the Division Artillery.

Reserve Command was initially to assist the Command A attack by fire from positions West of Longchamps and then follow Command A as it pushed through on a narrow front along the highway from Longchamps to Bertogne.

The 41st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron was to be held in readiness for protection of either flank. Combat Command B was to be held in the vicinity of Villeroux, prepared to pass through the 101st Airborne Division along the Bastogne-Noville-Wicourt axis the morning of January 14. Division Artillery was to be disposed as to put the 490th Armored Field Artillery Battalion in direct support of Combat Command A, 491st Armored Field Artillery Battalion where it could be shifted to the direct support of Combat Command B when required, and the 492nd Armored Field Artillery Battalion plus the 333rd Field Artillery Group in general support. Air liaison parties were provided for all major units. On securing Bertogne and the crossroad Southwest of it, it was planned that the Reserve Command would take over from Command A and hold the position, while Command A was then to turn East and, in coordination with Combat Command B and elements of the 101st Airborne Division, launch a converging attack on the Division final objective, the high ground South of Houffalize.

Meanwhile, the enemy's plans were so conceived that two of his Panzer and one Volksgrenadier Division were unconsciously slated to experience the efforts of the Thunderbolt Division. The 130th Panzer "Lehr" Division had already started displacing Eastward from the vicinity of St. Hubert toward the Bertogne-Houffalize road. The 9th Panzer Division, recently enriched by replacements, along with the 26th Volksgrenadier Division, had completed their dispositions North of Bastogne, designed to hold the South flank of the Bulge.

SOUTHWEST OF LONGCHAMPS

The Division Artillery, which had been continuously in action since December 30, 1944, was released from its 17th Airborne Division support mission, moved into positions Southwest of Longchamps and registered all its battalions before darkness came on January 12.



Attacking in column formation along the Longchamps-Bertogne highway Northeast of Bastogne, Combat Command A sparked the drive of the Bertogne-Houffalize engagement. The Thunderbolts were in the thick of it again.

At 11:00 a.m., January 13, 1945, just an hour after the attack had been launched, an enemy counterattack of approximately 20 tanks developed on the East Flank. Massed artillery fire adjusted by liaison planes smashed the German effort. Six enemy tanks were definitely hit and set afire and the rest withdrew to the Northeast. Combat Command A tanks then took the lead and made progress against moderate opposition until reaching an enemy minefield midway through the Bois De Nom De Falize. Division Engineers quickly breached this mine field that threatened to slow the advance. The attack continued.

INTO THE TOWN OF BERTOGNE

By 2:00 p.m. leading tank elements of Command A had cut the crossroads Southwest of Bertogne and were disposed on high ground to the South and East of the town itself. Tank fire supplemented by artillery and an air mission, was poured into the town of Bertogne during the remainder of the afternoon. Enemy forces in Bertogne were whittled down to about two companies of infantry with 11 tanks in support, four of which were destroyed and the rest immobilized. When nightfall came Command A consolidated its position astride the enemy's main line of resistance between Givès and Compogne and remained in a dominating position over Bertogne.

Combat Command B, after an all night march, closed in the vicinity of Villersoux at 10:00 a.m. In the meantime, the commander and a small party had made contact with the 101st Airborne Division and conducted a day-light reconnaissance for its attack the following morning. To speed the planned action, Command B was moved forward through Bastogne to an assembly area astride the Bastogne-Noville highway one mile South of Foy. The Command CP was established at Bastogne.

Under cover of darkness during the night of January 13-14, the Germans occupying Bertogne withdrew in an attempt to form a defensive block in the vicinity of Compogne to the East.

RESUMING THE ATTACK

Spearheaded by an infantry task force, Combat Command A at 10:00 a.m. on January 14, resumed its attack to clear the Bois De Nom De Falize. In coordination with this effort, the 41st Cavalry attacked in the same direction, along the East flank, to clear the Les Assins woods. Concentrated enemy small arms, machine gun, and mortar fire, together with some artillery, slowed the attack. By 3:00 p.m. the infantry task force had fought its way to the North edge of the Bois De Nom De Falize and was joined about two hours later by the 41st Cavalry along

the Longchamps-Compogne road. Heavy fire across open ground from the Pied Du Mont woods and Compogne, although interfered with somewhat by tank fire from the vicinity of Betogne, prohibited further advance.

Further East, Combat Command B plunged through Foy and Recogne to Noville where the column was forced to halt before stiffening resistance.

Command B's plan of attack had to be altered to fit the loss of Recogne and Foy by units of the 101st Airborne Division during the night. The tank task force, however, under cover of darkness, was moved into position South of Recogne and an infantry task force into position astride the main highway just South of Foy. At 9:30 a.m., following an artillery preparation, the tank task force attacked Recogne and the infantry task force attacked Foy. Both towns were retaken against light enemy opposition. Maneuvering along the fringe of some woods on the high ground to the West, the tank task force then attacked Cobru from the left rear with immediate success. Simultaneously the infantry task force pushed Northeast along the main highway. A German nine tank counterattack from Vaux about 3:00 p.m. was broken up by an air mission on Vaux and artillery fire, against adjusted by air observation, which destroyed four of the nine advancing German tanks. Overcoming a difficult stream crossing, the tank task force entered Noville, followed by the infantry task force. But, heavy German fire from weapons of all types inflicted heavy casualties upon the Command and delayed the final reduction of the town. When nightfall came all units of the Command withdrew to positions on high ground South and West of Cobru and astride the highway South of Noville.

Division Artillery's effort during the day was concentrated principally on the preparation for and support of Combat Command B's attack.

Staff and command representatives of the 11th Armored Division met at 7:00 p.m. with members of the 101st Airborne Division at Bastogne to coordinate plans for the attack scheduled for January 15. Agreements arrived at provided for assistance and close followup of Combat Command B's attack to capture the woods one mile East of Noville. Arrangements were also made at the meeting for holding the Fazon Woods between Combat Command A and Combat Command B and coordination of the offensive effort in this area.

During the day (January 12) the 602nd Tank Destroyer Battalion, minus Company C, was attached to the 11th Armored Division on Corps order. Company A of the battalion was in turn attached to Command B and instructed to report to Foy. Company B was attached to Command A and ordered to proceed to Monaville.

A Field Order from Corps headquarters was received at 8:25 p.m. prescribing action to be taken when the final



objective had been seized. The Thunderbolt Division was assigned the sector between Houffalize and Neufmoulin for occupation, organization, and defense. Contact with the VII Corps and protection of the North flank along the L'Ourthe River from Houffalize to the vicinity of Grinvet was also charged to the 11th Armored Division. For its Eastward attack on the Bertogne-Compogne-Mabompre road on January 15, 1945, Combat Command A



Our first taste of European winter

was organized into two task forces. A heavy infantry task force was initially to assist the attack by fire from positions along the North Edge of the Bois De Nom De Falize until Compogne had fallen, whereupon it was to join in the advance in a Northeast direction. The heavy tank task force was assigned the main effort of pushing East along the highway through the Pied Du Mont woods to seize Compogne and continue along the axis of advance.

After a powerful artillery preparation and air strike on Pied Du Mont woods, supported by fire of the infantry task force, the tank task force at 10:00 a.m. pushed rapidly Eastward clearing the Pied Du Mont woods at 11:30 a.m., Compogne at 3:10 p.m., Rastadt immediately thereafter, and Velleroux shortly before dark.

The 77th Volksgrenadier Regiment of the 27th Volksgrenadier Division had attempted to hold at all cost the defensive terrain of the Compogne-Rastadt-Velleroux triangle, to protect its division's further withdrawal. A strong delaying position was maintained in the Pied Du Mont woods. This force, supported by artillery fire, put up stiff small-arms, automatic weapons, and mortar fire resistance until overrun by the Command A tank task force. Over 400 prisoners were taken in this action.

THE FALL OF COMPOGNE

With the fall of Compogne, the infantry task force, under cover of available woods, moved to the Northeast to join forces with the tank task force astride the Compogne-

Mabompre highway just West of the Rau De Vaux. Heavy fire from woods on this unit's objective halted the attack at nightfall 500 yards short.



Lt. Col. Foy points out an objective

At 7:10 p.m. leading elements of the tank task force continuing Eastward through the Rau De Vaux defile were heavily counterattacked in the flanks by enemy tanks, artillery, and anti-tank fire. After losing nine medium tanks, the task force withdrew to high ground West of Velleroux for the night.

With elements of the 101st Airborne Division assisting by fire from their East flank, and neutralizing the enemy stronghold in Vaux on the West flank, Combat Command B planned to by-pass Noville and assault the key elevated and wooded terrain one mile East of Noville from which so much fire had been observed during the previous day's action.

Organization for the accomplishment of this mission contemplated a broad front assault by tanks with infantry following closely for mop-up purposes. After carefully registering each artillery battalion by air observation, massed artillery fires were brought down at 11:00 a.m. to destroy or neutralize known enemy positions in the forward edges and on commanding terrain within the woods. A portion of the woods North of the Noville-Bourch Highway was also softened by an air attack.

Combat Command B launched its combined tank and infantry attack at 11:45 a.m., bypassing Noville to the East, and with closely coordinated supporting fires took its objective by 3:30 p.m. Units of the 101st Airborne Division followed up, occupying Noville and taking up positions at 5:00 p.m. along the Noville-Bourcy Highway to the East.

Throughout the day Division Artillery fired preparations for both Combat Command A and Combat Command B attacks and continued active support missions. Late in the afternoon the 492nd Armored Field Artillery Battalion



was again placed in direct support of Command A's infantry task force. The 802nd Field Artillery Battalion, attached to the 333rd Field Artillery Group, supplemented direct fire support for Command A.

The critical routes between Longchamps and Bertogne as well as Longchamps and Compogne were swept for mines by members of the 56th Armored Engineer Battalion. Progress during the day of January 15, 1945, made it apparent that the Division Final objective probably would be taken within the next 24 hours. The marked intensification of the enemy's defensive attitude indicated that forces in contact had been ordered to make a last determined stand, selling space for time as expensively as possible.

THE ATTACK CONTINUES

Because of this situation orders for major units of the Division for January 16, 1945, were formulated. Combat Command A was directed to continue its attack on a broad front, leading initially with strong infantry units to secure a bridgehead East of Rau De Vaux. Upon crossing the Rau De Vaux, Command A was ordered to advance rapidly astride the Bertogne-Houffalize road to seize its assigned portion of the Division objective. The 41st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron was to continue on its North flank protection and VII Corps contact mission as far East as Houffalize.

Combat Command B was directed to initially assist the attack of 101st Airborne Division units on Vaux by fire, and to soften the woods North and Northeast as well as the town of Rachamps by similar action. The Command then was to attack and seize the Southeast tip of the woods one mile North of Vaux, and probe for further resistance to the Northeast along the Noville-Houffalize Highway. Upon completing that Command B was to be prepared to continue Northwest and assist Command A's crossing of the Rau De Vaux; or continue its advance to the Northeast along the Noville-Houffalize Highway to seize and occupy its portion of the Division objective.

Just past 10:00 orders were received from Corps Headquarters directing that the attack be continued at 8:30 the next morning, January 16, 1945.

Elements of the 41st Cavalry, by continuing through the night of January 15-16, 1945, reached the high ground West of Houffalize at 6:30 a.m., January 16, and drew fire from enemy forces still in the town.

Combat Command A's infantry task force jumped off at 8:00 a.m. to complete reduction of its previous day's objective. The main effort to the East was started at 9:00 a.m. on January 16. An infantry bridgehead over the Rau De Vaux allowed quick construction of a treadway bridge by engineers. The tank force then pushed rapidly Northeast through Mabompre in pursuit action. The infantry task force followed echeloned to the right. Several road blocks having been reduced while advancing under

heavy artillery, sniper, and automatic weapons fire, the advance tank elements of Command A reached the final objective at 1:20 p.m. Regrouping for the then assigned defensive mission, Command A disposed its infantry units across the front and the tanks were rallied in defilade positions to the West. The Command CP was moved forward from Longchamps to Compogne and closed in at 3:00 p.m.

THRU WYCORT

Combat Command B, in accordance with plans, on January 16, initiated action with tank and artillery fire on the woods North and Northeast of Vaux and the town of Rechamps. With its tank task force leading, followed closely by the infantry, Command B attacked at 9:45 a.m. and an hour later had seized the woods North of Vaux. Immediately reorganizing, Command B pushed Northeast through Wicourt against anti-tank fire from enemy forces to the East in the vicinity of Rechamps. Leaving a small holding force to reduce Wicourt, the infantry moved ahead, into the woods on the final objective at 3:00 p.m. supported by artillery and fire from the tank task force. The final objective was organized and outposted by 4:30 p.m.

Anti-tank, rocket and mortar fire from a strong enemy position in the woods near Neufmoulin was hurled into forces on the final objective during the remainder of the afternoon. At the close of the engagement, enemy order of battle in the Division sector indicated remnants of the 130th Panzer "Lehr" Division, 26th Volksgrenadier Division, 9th Panzer Division, and various General Headquarters troops, predominantly engineers, across the front. Spearheading the VII Corps attack to reduce the Belgian Bulge, the Division had been first to link up with First Army forces to the North along the L'Oorthe River near Houffalize.

In four days of offensive action (January 13-16) against stiff enemy resistance an 11th Armored Division two-



Getting ready to move out



pronged attack had advanced over seven miles, liberating 45 square miles of Belgian territory. Again over 12 towns had been taken by Thunderbolts, or cut off to fall into the hands of following troops; most notably Bertogne, Compogne, Mabompre, Noville, and Wicourt. During this period about 800 prisoners had been captured. Also, 50 irreplaceable German tanks, including six powerful Mark VI's had been taken from the enemy.

THE DRIVE FOR HOUFFALIZE

An American Armored Division and two Airborne Divisions had joined forces to operate as an indomitable team. In the drive for Houffalize, there were numerous examples of heroism. Sergeant (then Corporal) Wayne E. Van Dyke of Havana, Illinois, gunner in Company B of the 41st Tank Battalion, earned a Silver Star for his action at Noville. When this tank was knocked out by an 88, he was left in the town with a seriously wounded driver and bow gunner. The tank commander and loader went to the rear to direct other tanks around the town. Van Dyke pulled the driver and bow gunner from the tank, dragged them over to a church wall, played dead while German troops marched through the town.

Once, while Van Dyke was sprawled on the driver who was suffering from shock, a curious German came over to the apparently lifeless group and looked at the bow gunner's wrist watch but didn't touch him. After lying in this position for two hours, Van Dyke brought the two men into the church and placed the driver, who was unable to go farther, near the altar. Having given him first aid, Van Dyke and the bow gunner crawled back to their lines. The driver, in the meantime, was treated by a German medic and next day was rescued by his own men when they pushed into the town.

Another Company B, 41st tanker, Technician Fifth Grade (then a Private First Class) Herbert Burr of Kansas City, Missouri, won the Distinguished Service Cross when he



Shelter was hard to find

continued to fire at the enemy after all the crew in his tank were either killed or wounded from the blast of two 88 hits on his tank. After knocking out the enemy 88 crew, Burr pulled the wounded loader from his burning tank, crawled 200 yards through snow to the CP, dragging his helpless buddy. He then crept back to the tank, extinguished the fire and drove it back. This heroic act took place just outside of Houffalize.

With all enemy forces cleared South of the L'Ourthe River line as far East as Houffalize, the VIII Corps temporarily assumed a defensive attitude.

A Corps Field Order reached Division Headquarters at 1:00 a.m. on January 17, prescribing relief of the Division by the 17th Airborne Division; relief of the 101st Airborne Division by the 11th Armored Division was charged with organizing and defending a line from Hardingny to Bourcy inclusive, maintaining contact with the III Corps on the South and the 17th Airborne Division on the North flank, and protecting the right of the Corps.

Based on these premises, the Division plan called for the use of a heavy infantry and defense weapon force, under CC R, for defense of the newly assigned sector. The Div Arty supported the defense and the two major combat commands were held in reserve assembly areas.

Word was received at 3:00 a.m. that sweeping of the Bastogne-Houffalize road as far North as the Division final objective had been accomplished. By early daylight a Field Order from the 17th Airborne Division was received outlining the plan for relieving the Division elements.

At 8:00 a.m., January 18, 1945, the Division assumed responsibility for defense of the sector from Hardingny to Bourcy. The defense based on infantry strongpoints organized in depth, took full advantage of critical terrain. In order to secure the Noville-Houffalize road a limited objective attack was ordered in a Field Order that was received from Corps at 12:30 p.m. The 11th Armored Division was to be on the right in the attack with the 17th Airborne Division on the left. The Division mission was outlined as an attack at H hour, D day, to secure the high ground North and East of Buret; clear all enemy in a limited zone; and protect the Corps South flank. CC R continued its defense of the Division sector, maintaining active patrol contact with enemy forces to the East, and friendly forces to the North and South.

"D" DAY

Information was received from Corps on January 19, that D day had been established at January 21, 1945. Plans were made for the renewal of offensive action. The Division limited objective attack plan visualized CC A and CC B moving abreast, CC B on the right with CC R following centrally.

CC A was directed to move to an assembly area Southwest of Rachamps prior to daylight on January 21. CC B was



directed to move to an assembly area in the vicinity of Noville prior to daylight on January 21. From these areas the two Commands were to be poised for the attack. The Division CP was moved forward in the late afternoon of January 19, to a more central position one kilometer West of Bastogne.

Movement of Divisions units to attack position got underway on January 20. Around 5:30 p.m. Corps sent a message to Division Headquarters designating 8:30 a.m. of the next day as H-Hour.

NO RESISTANCE

The first elements of CC A initiated their advance at 7:30 a.m. on January 21. Pushing forward from the CC R line at 9:00 a.m., a small combined infantry and tank task force went through Boeur without resistance. A blown bridge and numerous hasty mine fields delayed progress. However, dismounted infantry and cavalry elements proceeded toward Buret, reaching there at Noon. A bridge having been constructed at Boeur, the bulk of the command moved forward and closed in Buret about 6:00 p.m., capturing 10 prisoners, who were waiting to surrender. CC B moved its infantry task force forward to the vicinity of Bourgy at 9:00 a.m. A tank task force remained in the woods about one mile East of Noville. Because of the unopposed progress of III Corps elements to the South, and the rapid progress of CC A, CC B was not committed to action but remained in a state of readiness.

Div Arty fired no missions during the day, except for the 490th Armored Field Artillery Battalion's original registration in preparation of CC A's attack.

Near Noon on January 21, an Operations Memorandum arrived from Corps which changed the boundary between the III and VIII Corps and extending the Division's sector further Eastward to include the whole of Bois De Rouvroy. Another Operations Memorandum arrived shortly afterwards directing that the Division continue its advance the next morning and clear all enemy in its zone.

On January 22, 1945, at 7:00 a.m. CC A Cavalry units moved into Bois De Rouvroy to complete the clearing of the Division sector. By 11:30 a.m. the Division pinch-out point was reached without further enemy contact.

VIII Corps directed on January 22, that the Thunderbolt Division prepare itself to assist the 17th Airborne Division in the accomplishment of its mission. CC A was in the most advantageous position for such an assignment so the directive was relayed to it.

Liaison was established by CC A with the 17th Division on January 23, and routes were reconnoitered to facilitate movement it required.

From January 24 to January 28, 1945, the Division saw little action other than active patrolling. On January 27, at 9:30 p.m. a Corps warning order was received outlining

the Corps attack plan for January 29, and specifying the Division mission. H-Hour was designated at 8:30 a.m. With the Bulge liquidated, the 11th Armored Division began a drive to pierce the Siegfried Line.

In the beginning of the attack launched to penetrate the Siegfried Line the Thunderbolt Division was retained in a reserve status.

On February 1, 1945, the 11th Armored Division, with a strength of 613 officers and 9,642 enlisted men, was still in VIII Corps reserve with the mission of remaining in place prepared to exploit any penetration of the enemy defenses which might result from the Corps attack then in progress. The attack to the East, generally along the high ground West of the Our River, was continuing against



Maintenance goes on even in combat

resistance varying from light to heavy, depending on the nearness of the Siegfried Line.

Orders were received on Corps on February 3, directing that the Division relieve elements of the 90th Infantry Division in the Southern part of its zone not later than Midnight, February 5. Then at 4:00 a.m., February 6, the Thunderbolts were to attack, seize, and hold Hill 568 for the protection of the 90th Infantry Division's South flank. Hill 568 is a dominant terrain feature within the Siegfried Line approximately three kilometers East of Grosskampenberg commanding the area in all directions.

SURPRISE ATTACK

CC R launched its attack on Hill 568 at 4:00 a.m. on February 6, as scheduled. The attack was made with the 55th and 21st Armored Infantry Battalions abreast, the 21st battalion making the main effort on the left. No artillery preparation was fired. As a result of exceptionally accurate intelligence of identifications, strength, and dispositions of enemy occupied pillboxes, complete surprise of the enemy was accomplished and Thunderbolt forces advanced swiftly through fortified, mined, and booby-



trapped areas to seize and occupy the division objective by 8:30 a.m. The Germans were expecting an armored frontal attack with the usual heavy artillery preparation, instead, CC R jumped off before dawn without artillery in a superbly executed maneuver .

This action represented an advance of approximately two miles through the tough Siegfried Line.

Stiff resistance to a 90th Infantry Division attack on the morning of February 7, prevented the attack from progressing to a point where it could offer protection to CC R's North flank. Because of this CC R delayed its scheduled attack and dug in further to improve its position.

Verbal instructions were received from Corps to continue the attack on the early morning of February 8. But, fighting through a heavily fortified and hotly defended valley, the 90th Division attack still did not bring its



A near bad accident

line forward abreast of the CC R Hill 568 position. Accordingly, CC R restricted its action to limited dismounted patrol activity. Late in the day the 90th Infantry Division reported that the reduction of two or three pillboxes would have to be accomplished before lateral contact with the Hill 568 position could be established. CC R was ordered to coordinate with the 90th Division on the renewal of the attack the next day.

Reconnaissance for routes and areas for possible future operations continued on February 9, 1945. CC B continued to maintain contact with the 6th Armored Division on the South and bolstered the South flank with additional troops on the West side of Our River.

PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE

Limited patrol activity was continued by CC R, still waiting for the 90th Infantry Division elements to seal off one of its exposed flanks. Another psychological warfare attack

was launched at 1:30 p.m. on February 9, employing both artillery leaflets and a public address system. Moderate enemy artillery fire was received throughout the day, increasing to heavy concentrations while the psychological warfare broadcast took place. The 63rd Armored Infantry Battalion reached a concentration area and relieved the 21st Armored Infantry Battalion. The 21st then moved to a reserve position at Heckhalenfeld. About 4:55 p.m. contact was finally established the 90th Division.

At 10:30 p.m. on February 9, an anticipatory field order from VIII Corps was received. The temporary assumption of a defensive attitude by the Corps after the capture of Prum and seizure of the Prum River line was specified. With a general shift of sectors to the South the 11th Armored Division was to be relieved by the 90th Infantry Division and assembled on Corps reserve, prepared to repel any enemy counterattack in the Corps zone.

The ground attack was resumed by CC R at 9:00 a.m. on February 10, 1945. To the South and Southeast of Hill 568 the refreshed Company C of the 63rd. Armored Infantry Battalion reduced an additional ten fortified places, including five pillboxes and five bunkers. After capture the bunkers and pillboxes were dynamited and rendered useless and 15 prisoners of war were taken. Coordinating with the CC R's attack the Division Artillery fired 64 missions, a total of 852 rounds on opportune targets and 50 additional rounds containing surrender leaflets were on isolated pillboxes during the morning hours.

Thawing and rainy weather continued through the day and road conditions throughout the entire VIII Corps zone reached such a critical stage that orders were issued to all units limiting to absolute essential tactical and administrative vehicles. The 56th Engineers and additional troops from major and attached units were put to work on a 24-hour road repair detail to help alleviate the situation. The capture of Prum and the Prum River line was accomplished by other elements of the Corps during the day of February 10, and at 6:00 p.m. the 11th Armored Division Field Order No. 12 was issued to comply with VIII Corps Field Order No. 9, which were received the previous evening. Minimum movement of the CC R elements only was directed due to the critical road situation. Enemy casualties after five days of fighting in the Siegfried Line amounted to 387 men, 100 of which were killed and wounded and the remaining 287, prisoners taken. Pillboxes and bunkers totalled 37, and in addition, five enemy tanks, one G.P. vehicle and one Anti-Tank gun.

On February 11, 1945, CC R was contacted by elements of the 90th Infantry Division and relief arrangements were made. Around midday Co. B of the 56th Engineer Battalion moved back West of the Our River. The 21st Armored Infantry Battalion then moved to the CC B assembly area at Weiswampach.



During the day an exchange of telephone calls, based on higher level developments, changed the VIII Corps defense plan. The Thunderbolts—minus the 41st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron—were assigned to a new zone for defense. This involved a shift to the South and immediate relief of certain parts of the 6th Armored Division. A contact with the 90th Infantry Division on the left flank was to be maintained and the Division was prepared to resume the offensive on short notice.

Moving further to the South, CC B was directed to defend the southern portion of the new zone, and CC R, after being relieved of its position by the 90th Infantry Division, was to occupy and defend the area held by the 41st Cavalry with Division Artillery supporting CC A and CC R in holding the area. The 41st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron upon relief passed to the operational control of the 6th Armored Division.

Elements of the 90th Infantry Division had initiated relief of the 55th and 63rd Armored Infantry Battalions before midnight while the 65th Armored Infantry Battalions moved to a reserve position West of the 31st Cavalry lines. February 11 still found the Engineers working tirelessly to keep roads open for vehicular movement.

By 1:30 a.m. on February 12, 1945, the CC R's Armored Infantry Battalions were relieved by elements of the 90th Infantry Division while the 63rd Armored Infantry Battalion in turn completed the relief of the 41st Cavalry at 6:45 a.m. At 8:00 a.m. the Cavalry Squadron commenced its move South to the 6th Armored Division sector clearing the area around 10:45 a.m.



More German atrocities

Reconnaissance was initiated by CC B to relieve elements of the 6th Armored Division situated in its extended zone to the South. Axial road repair in the Division area continued at a high rate as the 381st Quartermaster Truck company reinforced the 56th Engineer Battalion and with an additional Divisional work detail of 225 men all fully employed on the task. A total of 400 mines were cleared by A Company from a field Northwest of Krumbach.



German artillery worked in single units and were no match for ours

The quiet of February 13, 1945, allowed Division elements to complete and improve defensive installations and maintain contact with the 90th Infantry Division and the 6th Armored Division. No resistance was encountered by patrols to the West bank of the Our River in the CC B sector. Nebelwerfer, mortar and artillery fire fell on CC R positions during the day but being light and sporadic did little harm. Training of reinforcements, maintenance, and work on the roads in the vicinity of CC A continued without interruption. Division Artillery fired a total of 36 missions, expending 366 rounds, 20 of which were surrendered leaflets.

Counterattacks of platoon strength were made against CC R on February 14 but resulted in no loss. Quiet continued much as yesterday but was accompanied by pouring rain. Division Artillery completed the first half of the month with its 695th mission. A strenuous battle to repair and maintain roads was continued, being directed and supervised by the 56th Engineer Battalion.

Very little enemy activity was noted on February 15, 1945, as the Thunderbolts continued their defensive mission.



Into the Dragon's Teeth



Mounted doughboys of the 63rd Armored Infantry Battalion. Foreground shows a pillbox.

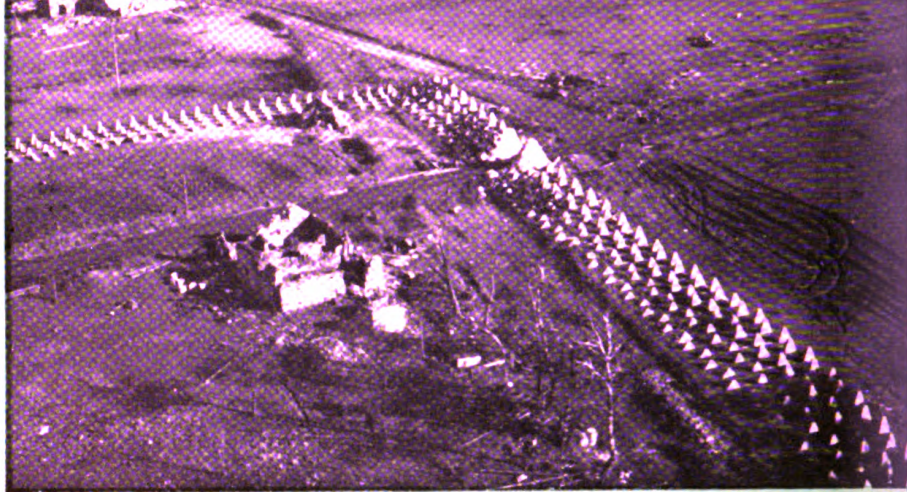


A bulldozer of the 56th Eng. Battalion prepares a ford across a river at Neufelden, Germany

Pictured here are civilians made homeless by the advance.



*CC A vehicles dispersed
near Leidenborn on Sieg-
fried Line.*



We over-ran this German tank.

Packages from home!





*The Air Corps helped us
at Foy.*



*Special Service Swingsters entertaining at
Neufchateau Rest Center*



The closing of the Bulge.



Our attached artillery.



Troops of Division searching German prisoners of war.



Machine gun outpost.



*A couple of 41st Tankers
"lighting up."*



Artillery Gunner checking aiming stakes



*An infantryman points out
a German sniper position.*

*55th Armored Infantry
Battalion advancing
through Siegfried line at
Leidenborn, Germany.*



*Medical Clearing Station of the 55th Armored Infantry
Battalion at Leidenborn, Germany*



*A short break in
the action.*



*21st Armored Infantry
Battalion sergeant giving
his rifle a "going over".*



The Krauts got a rest when there were packages to open

*Division MP's inspect Ger-
man weapons turned in
when the 55th Armored
Infantry Battalion cap-
tured Themar, Germany.*





*Bulldozer maintaining
road near Hechbusheid,
Germany.*



*41st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron armored car dis-
plays captured Nazi flag on Siegfried Line*



*Co. B, 56th Eng. Battalion
bridging Our River
in Belgium.*



UP TO THE SIEGFRIED LINE

Field Order No. 11 was issued by VIII Corps at 12:00 a.m. directing an H-hour attack to the Southeast, this being to clear enemy in the area West of the Prum River and to make a junction with the XII Corps in the vicinity of Mael. The VIII Corps was operating at this time as the Northernmost Corps in the Third Army with the V Corps of the First Army on the North flank and XII Corps bringing up the South flank. From South to North, VIII Corps troops were disposed in the following order: 6th Cavalry Group, 6th Armored Division, 11th Armored Division, the 90th Infantry Division, 4th Infantry Division and the 87th Infantry Division. Field Order No. 11 directed the 11th Armored Division—minus the 41st Cavalry—to attack at H-hour on February 18, and to capture Leidenborn and Reiff, thereby clearing the enemy in the zone and maintaining a contact with the 90th Infantry Division on the left, also in preparation for assisting the advance of the 6th Armored Division the Corps action ordered for H-hour was to be a limited objective action using mainly only the 90th Infantry Division and the 11th Armored Division in the center. The 6th Cavalry Group and the 6th Armored Division situated on the South were to attack east and the 4th and 87th Infantry Divisions were directed on the Corps order to maintain their defenses on the North flank. Division plans for the attack were initiated immediately.

After dark the 63rd Armored Infantry Battalion and the 55th Armored Infantry Battalion were rotated according to plans made that afternoon by CC R. Intermittent mortar and artillery fire continued to fall on Infantry positions. Three annoying pillboxes were seized and destroyed during the day of February 16, 1945, by patrols of the CC R, meanwhile the main Axial roads were beginning to show signs of recovery under the constant attentions and toils of the 56th Armored Engineer Battalion.

A new plan for attack was detailed which would take advantage of the partial penetration along the Northern flank of the Siegfried Line. This entailed a series of daily "leap-frog" Infantry Battalion attacks on a narrow front to cut through the remaining fortifications of the Siegfried Line by a flanking action from the North. With CC R through the fortified area it was then contemplated that in turn CC B would move through the CC R zone and then attack from the North flank, approaching the concrete fortifications from deep in the Left flank and the rear. Field Order No. 13 was issued at 12:00 a.m. on February 16, 1945, formalizing this attack at H-hour on February 18. The maximum effort was to be on the Left flank in order to capture Leidenborn, Reiff, and to clear the enemy in the Division zone.

Further orders were preparations to assist the advance of the 6th Armored Division; the occupation of Harspelt, Sevenig and Roscheid. The 56th Armored Engineer Battalion was directed to continue road repairs and main-

tenance on routes in the Division area and was to be prepared to install a bridge across the Our River at Peterskirche for the CC B.

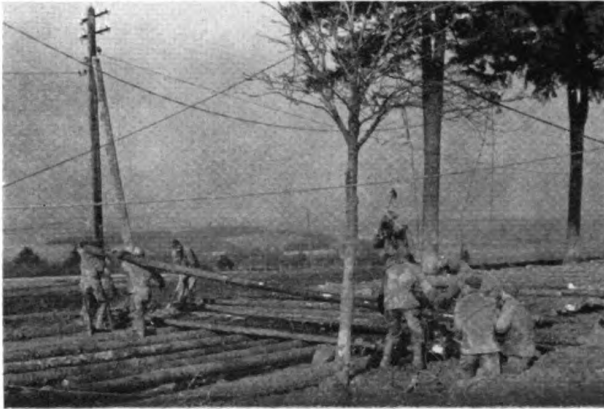
Identification of enemy units opposing the Division, which included the 167th Infantry Division, 339th Infantry Regiment, 340th Infantry Division, the 694th, 695th and 696th Infantry Regiments and Artillery of the 79th Infantry Division, revealed a total strength of 1800 men but all without the apparent aid of tanks. The enemy utilized a general lull on the division front by sending out small patrols, the firing of small and medium artillery of an annoying nature and generally bettering small scale positions.

GERMAN MORALE LOW

It was obvious after questioning prisoners that the enemy was conducting a constant reshuffling of troops. The German morale was very low due to a dire lack of food. Medical supplies were also inadequate and there was a noticeable supply of heavy weapons and transportation facilities. Enemy desertions were frequent. Since February 6, 1945, the Division had captured 291 prisoners of war, the majority of whom had surrendered or deserted at their first opportunity.

On February 17, Division Artillery destroyed three concrete bunkers and one permanent roadblock with a 155mm gun at close range. Two tanks were also knocked out. CC R and CC B maintained their positions and contact with the 90th Infantry Division on the North and the 6th Armored Division on the South. CC B Infantry elements crossed the Our River at Peterskirche without contacting the enemy and proceeded one kilometer South of Lutzkampen to Hill 512.

Under the supervision of the Corps Engineer, 200 men from CC A and 240 men from CC B were assigned to road repair work with the 56th Armored Engineer Battalion. A narrow-front sneak attack was launched at 5:45 a.m. on February 18, 1945, led by the 63rd Armored Infantry Battalion. CC R caught the enemy in the midst of a troop shifting disposition. The vigorous infantry-tank assault, without the warning of an artillery preparation, completely surprised and confused the enemy, according to the prisoners of war from the 987th Grenadier Regiment and the 267th Volksgrenadier who began to pour in. The 63rd Armored Infantry Battalion recaptured Grosskampenberg at 8:05 a.m. the same day with base fire support from Lutzkampen. Company C of the 56th Armored Engineer Battalion blasted two paths through the dragon's teeth and a minefield in the rear. This was accomplished by 9:15 a.m. The 63rd Armored Infantry Battalion cleaned out fortifications to advantageous positions with support from tanks and artillery fire. Sustaining the force of attack, the 55th Armored Infantry Battalion, with support by Engineers and tanks, passed straight through to take the first objective, Leidenborn, by 5:00 p.m.



The 56th Armored Eng. Battalion rebuilds a road



One Engineer works—the rest watch

In many instances it was found that unoccupied trenches and scattered mines surrounded the pillboxes. Most of these pillboxes were defended while others were abandoned soon after our troops fired on them. A further 72 prisoners of war were captured.

Division Artillery fired 90 missions in support of the attack, expending 1,724 rounds while intermittent firing of surrender leaflets continued on defended towns.

In coordination with the 90th Infantry Division, VIII Corps directed the Thunderbolts to continue the attack on February 19.

The enemy reacted to CC R's previous day attack with a company strength counterattack at 9:30 a.m. This counterattack was made by elements of the 986th Volksgrenadier Regiment and of the 276th Volksgrenadier Division armed with rifles and automatic weapons and supported by moderate artillery fire. C Company, 55th Armored Infantry Battalion, met and repulsed the attack.

After considerable artillery fire on the proposed target, two companies of the 55th Armored Infantry Battalion jumped off to seize Herzfeld. Extremely heavy mortar and artillery fire delayed the attack at the edge of town but the town was secured by 3:00 p.m. After clearing the general area a net total of pillboxes, destroyed or neutralized, amounted to 23 for the day and 63 prisoners of war captured. The 63rd Armored Infantry Battalion prepared to continue the attack on Reiff the following morning after clearing the Leidenborn area improving its position.

Road maintenance was continued by the 56th Armored Engineers and a total of 130 Tellermines were cleared from the area.

ENEMY DISORGANIZED

A progressively disorganized enemy offered little hinderance against the rapidly advancing 63rd Armored Infantry Battalion on February 20, 1945, completing a narrow penetration of the main Siegfried Line fortifications. The town of Sengerich was secured at 8:30 a.m. but the retreating enemy dropped heavy mortar and artillery fire on it shortly afterward. This brief, but bloody, vigorous and determined action resulted in the capture of 52 prisoners of war and the seizure and destruction of 10 pillboxes.

CC B upheld contact with adjacent elements and continued its probing patrol activity.

An enemy tank was destroyed by the Division artillery. Quick action on the part of counterbattery missions continually minimized hostile mortar and artillery fire.



Our rough riders rode anything



CC R submitted a plan for the following day's action at 6:25 p.m. which was approved at 7:50 p.m. along with orders for a renewal of attack.

On February 21, 1945, CC R's mission was a limited objective attack to seize Roscheid and to clear the pillboxes Northeast and Northwest of Roscheid to the Sevenig-Roscheid road, widening the break of the main Siegfried Line. CC R's 55th Armored Infantry Battalion launched its attack at 7:00 a.m., supported by Company B, 22nd Tank Battalion and Company C, 56th Armored Engineers. By 9:36 a.m. the mission was accomplished. The 63rd Armored Infantry Battalion remained in positions captured the previous day while it prepared for the final assault on Reiff which was scheduled for February 22. Troublesome civilians at Lutzkampen required guarding by one platoon of Battery D, 575th Anti-Aircraft Battalion.

A patrol was dispatched from Sevenig by CC B at 11:45 a.m. to gain contact with the 6th Armored Division on the South flank but enemy occupied pillboxes enroute prevented completion of the mission.

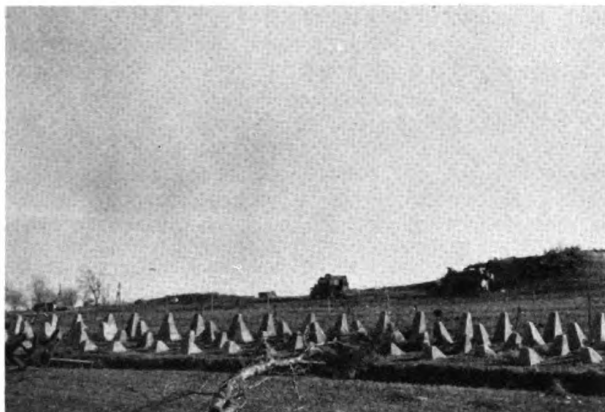
On the same day, Division Artillery fired on a German troop concentration in Reiff and scored four direct hits on enemy tanks.

The 41st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron was released from the 6th Armored Division at midday and moved back North to an assembly area in the vicinity of Lascheid. Meanwhile the 90th Infantry Division, with a toe-hold in the Siegfried Line provided by the Division's action earlier in the month, was making steady progress on the North flank. On the South flank the 6th Armored Division initiated offensive action eastward across the Our River. At about 4:00 p.m. on February 21 Binscheid was captured and lateral contact was maintained.

THRU THE SIEGFRIED LINE

Orders for resuming a coordinated attack on February 22, made by the 6th Armored Division on the South flank. Fragmentary verbal orders were transmitted to the major units concerned without delay.

The attack plans for CC R, CC B, and Division Artillery were submitted and coordinated and Operations Memorandum No. 27 was issued at 8:00 p.m. for the completion of the division mission the following day. The general plan contemplated a continuance of the infantry action on was received from VIII Corps at 10:55 a.m. The general Corps plan contemplated an accelerated drive to the South by the 11th Armored Division and the 90th Infantry Division, who were then through the main defenses of the Siegfried Line, to assist in the frontal assault being the East flank by CC R, while permanent fortifications in the Siegfried Line to the West were masked by smoke. CC B was then to move infantry and tanks through the CC R zone via Lutzkampen and Herzfeld, afterwards



Dragon's Teeth

swinging Southwest and clearing their zone in the Siegfried Line by an attack from the left rear.

CC R was directed to seize and occupy Eschfeld and Reiff, coordination closely with the 90th Infantry Division. Upon capture of Eschfeld by CC R, CC B was directed to clear bunkers and pillboxes in its zone. The normal support mission was allocated to the Division Artillery. This included specific provisions for coordinating fire with the 6th Armored Division and the 90th Infantry Division. At 7:30 a.m. on February 22, 1945, CC R's 55th Armored Infantry Battalion, supported by tanks and engineers, jumped off from positions East of Roscheid to seize and secure Eschfeld. This move was made in order to set the stage of the CC B attack. The town itself was taken at 10:00 a.m. and by 10:45 a.m. critical ground surrounding Eschfeld was securely within our hands. Ten bunkers were cleared during this action and a total of 74 prisoners of war were taken.



We made our own roads



After a heavy artillery preparation the 63rd Armored Infantry Battalion launched a surprising mounted infantry and tank attack on the town of Reiff. This attack was made at 8:15 a.m. and an hour later remnants of the 988th Volksgrenadier Regiment of the 276th Volksgrenadier Division were completely overwhelmed and the town was securely in our hands. The speed of this attack resulted in the capture of a battalion commander and his staff along with an additional 187 prisoners of war.

An American M4 tank being used by the Germans was also recaptured. Immediately after dismounted infantry was sent to the South and East to clear the remainder of the division zone and to occupy advantageous high ground to the South of the town of Reiff. At 4:30 p.m. a counter-attack of two-platoon strength was repulsed without loss. Passing through Eschfeld after its capture by CC R, the first of two task forces of CC B attacked Southwest through the Siegfried Line fortifications with tanks and infantry, systematically clearing bunkers and pillboxes until the Southern division boundary was reached. Contact was made with the 6th Armored Division by the second task force by 1:20 p.m.

Division Artillery fired heavy concentrations on towns in the division zone during the day's action and a total of 2,662 rounds were expended. Air observation planes dropped surrender leaflets on towns just before they were entered by our attacking ground forces. This aided greatly in reducing the lengthy process of mopping up.

The attack of February 22 ended the division's offensive action in the Siegfried Line and resulted in the reduction of 30 square kilometers of the main Siegfried Line fortified zone, as the division made advances totaling 12 kilometers on an average two and one half kilometer front. A total of 197 pillboxes and bunkers were seized and cleared and 716 prisoners of war were captured.

The principal operational activity during the day of February 23 consisted of extensive patrol activity and the strengthening of positions along the division boundaries. There was no enemy activity on this day although nine prisoners gave themselves up to our troops. Company B, 22nd Tank Battalion, after 18 days of continuous wearing action, was detached from CC R and replaced by Company A, 22nd Tank Battalion. Company A, 602nd Tank Duty Battalion was released from CC R to join the 90th Infantry Division. Battery C, 174th Field Artillery Battalion was released from attachment at 3:00 p.m.

TO HERMESPAND

According to verbal orders from VIII Corps, CC A was alerted for movement East to the vicinity of Hermespond to back up the 87th Infantry Division. Operations Memorandum No. 25 was received from VIII Corps at 6:45 p.m. directing the 11th Armored Division to assemble in its present location and await orders.

Patrol activity and maintenance of various outposts in the Reiff and Eschfeld area were continued on February 24, pending a solid juncture of the 90th Infantry Division and the 6th Armored Division. CC A was attached to the 87th Infantry Division for such defensive activities as repelling counter-attacks on the Corps North flank.

The long and backbreaking work of engineer details and improving weather had healed the road communications problem so all men engaged in repair and maintenance road work were ordered to rejoin their parent units at 5:00 p.m.



Our attached artillery

Field Order No. 12 from VIII Corps headquarters was received at 1:00 p.m. on February 24, directing an H-hour attack on February 27, 1945, to capture Hallschlag and Ormont, and to seize the high ground South of Cronenburg while the Corps turned its attention directly East toward the Kyll River. The Thunderbolts (minus CC A) were placed in Corps reserve. They were prepared to resume offensive operations on short notice, to capture the high ground North of the Ober Bettingen, or to exploit a breakthrough. Field Order No. 14 was issued at 9:00 p.m. directing CC R to assemble in the Lascheid-Bracht-Haspelt-Gruflange area and to release certain platoon and company sized elements to other units. One platoon of Company B and Company C, 56th Engineers were to return to their parent unit; one platoon of Battery D, 575th Anti-Aircraft Battalion to Division Artillery; and Company A, 22nd Tank Battalion to CC B. Division Artillery was placed in general support of the Corps and was directed to reconnoiter the vicinity of Habscheid and move into position areas.

On February 25, 1945, CC A with the 161st Smoke Generating Company and Battery B, 174th Field Artillery Battalion attached, initiated a movement to the 87th Infantry Division area, closing in the Losheim Pass area near Manderfeld at 3:50 p.m. That night under the cover of darkness, the 63rd Armored Infantry Battalion



and the 41st Cavalry relieved elements of the 347th Infantry Regiment, 87th Infantry Division as that division concentrated on its South flank for an attack to the East. CC R moved to its new assembly area at 3:30 p.m., their command post opening at Lascheid, Belgium. Company A, 22nd Tank Battalion, Company B, 81st Medical Battalion and Company C, 56th Engineer Battalion were released from CC R to return to their parent units. Headquarters Division Artillery and the 491st and 492nd Armored Field Artillery Battalions moved to Habscheid. New weapons were test-fired and the conduct of combat drill on the proper engagement of Tiger tanks was practiced by CC B on February 26. General maintenance and rehabilitation were emphasized throughout the division. 56th Armored Engineer Battalion parties initiated route and bridge reconnaissance North and Northeast of Biealf in anticipation of a possible movement to that area.

On the same day, CC A, under operational control of the 87th Infantry Division, relieved the 374th Infantry Regiment in the line at midday, meanwhile the 87th Infantry Division pushed Eastward to the South of the Losheim pass. Two companies of the 42nd Tank Battalion and Battery B, 174th Field Artillery Battalion were attached to the 490th Armored Field Artillery Battalion to increase the volume of fire support along the Corps North flank.

The following day Division Artillery continued reinforcing missions for the Corps Artillery. CC A, still under the 87th Infantry Division, continued enemy contact patrolling activities and fire support of the infantry attack. The 161st Smoke Generating Company was released from attachment at 11:00 a.m. on February 26. Plans were made covering the possibility that CC A's task might be altered to an attack on enemy positions to the East with the mission of capturing the Losheim Pass entrance town of Scheid.

Throughout the day of February 26, 1945, the division continued maintenance, rehabilitation, combat drill and test-firing of weapons.

CROSSING THE KYLL RIVER

From VIII Corps came verbal orders directing the division to attack through the 4th Infantry Division early on March 3, 1945. They were to push rapidly to the East to capture the high ground North of Gerolstein and to seize the crossing over the Kyll River between Ober Bettingen and Gerolstein. The 4th Infantry Division was to continue the attack until March 2, and remain in the zone after the Thunderbolts passed through on March 3 to clean up enemy passed by the armor. The 87th Infantry Division, 6th Armored Division and the 6th Cavalry Group were also to continue powerful pressure on a broad front.

At this point the 11th Armored Division stood ready for an accelerating destruction of the deteriorating German

Army after adding a significant part in the cracking of the Siegfried Line to its notable mid-winter Ardennes action. They had fired about 1,200 missions, expending 24,000 rounds during the month, inflicting the great majority of damage on enemy personnel and materiel. No tactical air missions were flown in support of the division due mainly to adverse weather conditions and the close-in nature of action.

The 167th Volks Grenadier Division was defending the sector where the 11th Armored Division made its attack on February 6, 1945, and continued until February 11. The 261 prisoners of war taken during that action were from the 331st and 339th Regiments of that division.

South of the 167th Volks Grenadier Division, the 340th Volks Grenadier Division was defending the sector to which the 11th Armored Division moved as a result of the boundary shift to the South on February 11. Believing that VIII Corps would remain on the defensive for some time as a result of the main Allied effort impending in the North, the enemy started a switch of units. Fortress



Even the mud couldn't stop us

Battalions, Alarm Companies, Fusilier Companies, Construction Companies and some Nevelwerfer units were used as a holding force while the 340th V.G. Division started a movement North to the Prum River area. The 276th Volks Grenadier Division had already assembled near Lichtenborn, and on February 17, was in the process of relieving the 340th V.G. Division on the 11th Armored Division front to reinforce these miscellaneous units.

EARLY MORNING ATTACK

The attack in the early morning darkness of February 18 completely surprised the 987th Volks Grenadier Division which had only arrived a few hours beforehand, and destroyed its combat effectiveness with the exception of a few remnants which managed to get back and join the 988th Regiment which had not yet come into the line.



In an effort to forestall complete destruction of the 276th V.G. Division, General Tollsdorf of the 340th V.G. Division, ordered the 694th V.G. Regiment of his division back from the Prum vicinity in order to bolster the sagging defense as a piecemeal recommitment of his forces was made. On February 19 and 20 the 968th Volks Grenadier Regiment of the 276th V.G. Division was committed with the same disastrous results. When the 11th Armored Division accomplished its mission by capturing Reiff on February 22, the 694th Regiment of General Tollsdorf's 340th V.G. Division had returned to the scene and was thrown in with the remaining 988th Regiment of the 276th Volks Grenadier Division to stop the Thunderbolt thrust. Their lack of success is evidenced by the speed with which the division objective was taken and the capture of 202 prisoners on that day.

In spite of badly crippled communications, limited personnel for such close-in deliberate ground action and grueling weather, the combined arms and indomitable will to win of the 11th Armored Division had produced a highly significant contribution to the VIII Corps in the Siegfried Line during the month of February.

On March 1, 1945, the VIII Corps was pushing Eastward to the Kyll River through a gap in the Siegfried Line. From North to South on a broad front the 87th, 4th, and 90th Infantry Divisions, the 6th Armored Division and the 6th Cavalry Group were all seeking a toehold on the East bank of the Prum River from which a dash to seize crossings over the Kyll River could be made.



We moved the civilians out

In the center, with Prum secured, the 4th Infantry Division led the Corps. A small bridgehead across the river at Prum began to look like the most favorable springboard from which to launch a rapid thrust for a bridge across the Kyll River.

The Thunderbolts (minus CC A), were regrouping in preparation for their planned attack through the 4th

Infantry Division on March 3 to capture the high ground North of Gerolstein and to seize bridges over the Kyll River between Ober Gettingen and Gerolstein. Meanwhile CC A, under operational control of the 87th Infantry Division, was consigned defensively on the Corps North flank, blocking the Losheim Pass from the vicinity of Manderfeld. As a whole, with 622 officers and 9,786 enlisted men, the Division was slightly understrength although no significant shortages of combat equipment existed.

With the return of CC A to Division control being problematical, flexible plans had to be formulated for the accomplishment of the assigned Corps mission. The terrain being favorable for an armored combined arms action, and the delaying effect of a single bridge crossing bottleneck being appreciated, the basic constitution of a very strong CC B for accomplishment of the Division mission was arrived at. Tanks and armored infantry battalions were assigned to this command for the basic constitution of two balanced task forces. In the event of CC A becoming available, it was contemplated to launch the attack with the major combat commands abreast, CC B making the main effort on the South flank. Both combat commands were to be supported by centrally controlled artillery, which in any event could throw its full weight in behind CC B.

WEST OF THE PRUM RIVER

Operations Memorandum No. 30 had been issued accordingly, directing a movement to an assembly area West of the Prum River, and preparations for an attack at H-hour on March 3 through the 4th Infantry Division to seize the Division objective.

Upon release from the 87th Infantry Division, CC A was directed to move to another assembly area in the vicinity of Selierich, Hersheid and Hontheim and prepared to attack early on March 3. CC R was to follow CC B to its assembly area around Buchet. Division Artillery was directed to move its elements to an assembly area near Niedermehren.



Preparing for the attack



On March 1, 1945, Division Forward Command Post moved from Wilwerdange, Luxembourg to Hersheid, Germany. CC A remained committed under operational control of the 87th Infantry Division.

Shortly before midnight the 4th Infantry Division sent out information that a Bailey bridge was ready for traffic at Prum.

At midday on March 2 a conference was called between the Corps Commander, and the commanding generals of the 4th Infantry Division and the 11th Armored Division to discuss the lack of a sufficient bridgehead East of the Prum River to allow for the deployment of armored troops. A decision was made to postpone the attack planned for the following day until March 4. In the meantime the 4th Infantry Division was to enlarge the bridgehead while the 11th Armored Division completed arrangements for passing through the infantry.

In preparation for the attack a survey was made by CC B and Division Artillery, the 492nd Armored Field Artillery Battalion moved into defiladed positions East of the Prum River and engineers cleared and repaired the narrow, twisting road through Prum and across the bridge. Meanwhile, the 4th Infantry Division was making only limited gains East of the Prum River.

RENEWING THE OFFENSIVE

At this time parts of the 340th Volksgrenadier Division and the German 5th Parachute Division were disposed along the high ground East of the Prum River. According to the 4th Infantry Division they were putting up determined resistance. The enemy was using an unusually large number of machine guns which were well dug in and both AT and AP minefields were abundant. Heavy small arms, automatic weapons, rocket artillery and mortar fire were being received along the front. Enemy morale seemed to be much better than the Wehrmacht average. Arrangements for delaying the attack until March 4, 1945

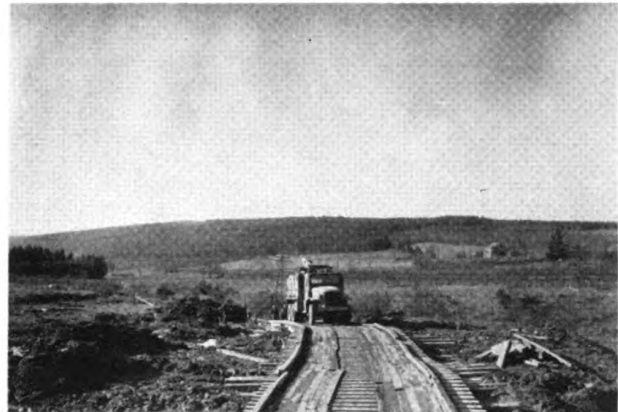


Even an Armored Division had to walk

were cancelled by a telephone call from VIII Corps at 9:00 p.m. The Division was ordered to make its attack not later than noon on March 3. An hour and a half later Corps Operations Memorandum No. 27 was received by the 11th Armored Division confirming the telephone call and directing a general renewal of offensive action all along the Corps front to capture the high ground West of the Kyll River and to effect a junction with the XII Corps near Densborn. The 4th Infantry Division was to assist the attack in the 11th Armored Division zone, protecting the North flank between Gondelsheim and Oos and follow the advance of the 11th Armored Division.

The operation then seemed to be determined so all units were alerted. Traffic control through the wreckage of Prum and across the bridge was provided for. Before midnight Field Order No. 15 was being distributed to all the division elements covering the mission of attack to establish a bridge head across the Prum River, advancing through the 4th Infantry Division to capture the high ground West of the Kyll River and seizing crossings of the Kyll in the vicinity of Gerolstein.

CC B was directed to attack establishing a bridgehead across the Prum River and to advance along the Prum-Budesheim axis and seize the division objective. They were also



And the supplies can get through

directed to protect the Division's South flank and to protect the North flank from Oos inclusive to the East. With the 491st and 492nd Armored Field Artillery Battalions in the direct support and the 333rd Field Artillery Group in general support of CC B, Division Artillery was to support the attack with preparations and massing of fires. Division Reserve, (Company A, 22nd Tank Battalion) was to be prepared to move East of the Prum River and follow CC B. Anti-Aircraft protection was to be provided by 575th Anti-Aircraft Battalion around the bridge East of Prum.

At 6:00 a.m. on March 3, 1945, the 4th Infantry Division launched an attack and captured Weinsheim with elements



proceeding to the East and South of the town to improve the bridgehead by 10:30 a.m.

Coordinating with the 4th Infantry Division, Division TCP's were placed in operation at critical points in Prum and on the Prum bridge site before daylight, and at 7:00 a.m. CC B initiated its move across the Prum River. By noon both infantry battalions were in position and the tank battalions were across the River.

At 12:30 a.m. CC B commenced moving through the forward elements of the 4th Infantry Division. The jump off had to be delayed temporarily as the exact location of the 4th Infantry Division's front lines could not be determined due to continuous movements of the foot elements of that division. CC B launched its attack at 12:55 a.m. without the assistance of artillery in order to clear the forward infantry elements. Only light to moderate resistance met the Division's attack. The commanding general of the 11th Armored Division at this point asked the commanding general of the 4th Infantry Division to freeze the infantry troops in place, and, by 3:05 p.m. CC B's Northern task force had shaken loose and reached the high ground where the advance was delayed by the extensive use of enemy mines. One minefield cost the Division three medium tanks. Meanwhile the Southern task force of CC B entered Fieringen at 4:55 p.m. and at 5:15 p.m. the town was cleared and the high ground to the East was secured and organized. More mines were removed by engineers than had been encountered by the Division at any previous operation. The day's action resulted in an advance of six kilometers on a two kilometer front.

Division Artillery in supporting CC B fired 56 missions, expending 1,064 rounds during the half-day's operation and destroyed four enemy tanks. The 491st Armored Field Artillery Battalion moved forward to positions to the East of Prum River at 3:00 p.m. in order to give close support to the following day's actions.



War is Hell!

The entire 5th Parachute Division and the 14th and 15th Parachute Regiments and Kampf Gruppe Kegal opposed the Division advance during the day. Anti-tank guns, mortars and tanks were used to augment a defense from well-chosen positions. A total of 56 prisoners of war were captured.

WALLERSHEIM AND BUDESHEIM

CC B resumed the attack at 6:30 a.m. on March 4, moving forward against moderate resistance on the South and heavy resistance on the North. Wallersheim and Budesheim



On the outskirts of Budesheim

were cleared of the enemy by noon and 2:00 p.m., respectively, representing an advance of four and one half kilometers. By late afternoon the high wooded ground three kilometers to the West of the Kyll River was secured. By 4:10 p.m. leading elements were at the edge of the woods one and one half kilometers West of the Kyll River opposite Lissingen. Further advances were halted by artillery, mortar and anti-tank fire from the East of the river. This action resulted in the command destroying five enemy tanks, six 88mm guns and the capture of 70 prisoners of war.

CC A was released to Division control and at 3:00 p.m. a movement was initiated to an assembly area West of the Prum River and North of CC B's zone. The 41st Cavalry was turned over to CC R on arrival at Buchet. The combat command closed in the Wescheid area at midnight after being slowed down by intermittent rain and snow.

The 4th Infantry Division followed up the advance closely, scouring out the wooded areas and taking over the occupation of captured towns. Budesheim was reached at 6:50 p.m. by leading elements.

With CC A now available to the Division plans were made in the afternoon for the completion of the Division mission. Enemy reaction in the Lissingen indicated strong defensive positions East of the Kyll in the vicinity of



Gerolstein. The terrain here was also unfavorable, offensive action being canalized to a narrow valley dominated by a ridge on the East side of the river. The plan was directed toward more favorable crossing sites to the North between Ober Bettingen and Nieder Bettingen. The plan directed CC B to hold its positions at Lissingen with a skeleton force, to assemble in the vicinity of Budenheim, and, on order, to renew its attack to the North and East and seize the Bettingen crossings of the Kyll River. Hoping to seize a bridge intact by a quick surprise action, the 4th Infantry Division agreed to push their elements North of CC B rapidly Eastward on March 5, in order to seize and secure two wooded hills North of the Oos River



crossing. This assistance to the CC B attack was designed to preserve the element of surprise. Also, this was to avoid the bogging down of the armored thrust before the final objective was reached through the necessity of making a preliminary river crossing. The support mission of Division Artillery remained unchanged. CC A was ordered forward to the Budenheim-Wallersheim area pending developments. Division troops were scheduled for a movement to Rommersheim.

Field Order No. 14 was received from VIII Corps at 11:20 p.m. directing an attack in the prescribed zone and the seizure of the West bank of the Rhine River from Andernach to Sinzig, both inclusive. The Thunderbolts were ordered to spearhead the attack by making a crossing of the Kyll River and then advancing on a Budenheim-Kelberg-Mayen axis to capture Andernach. The Kyll River crossing was to be made in the 4th Infantry Division zone and in conjunction with them. They were also to assist the river crossing.

The 87th, 4th and 90th Infantry Divisions were to follow on a three division front, assisting the 11th Armored Division where necessary and clearing their respective zones North and South.

On March 5 CC B left a screen opposite Lissingen and moved North from the Budenheim area ready to move through the elements of the 4th Infantry Division after their capture of the two dominating hills just North of Oos. Company A, 22nd Tank Battalion was released as Division Reserve and returned to its parent battalion. The 4th Infantry Division attack failed to accomplish its assigned mission by noon. CC B sent a tank task force North to the Oos crossing and found the bridge blown up and automatic weapon and small arms fire prevented any engineer work at the site until the 4th Infantry Division could complete its mission. No by-pass could be located.

Late in the day the Easternmost critical hill still remained to be captured by the infantry. Plans were made for renewing the attack at first light on the morning of March 6. The screening force left by CC B at Lissingen was passed through by the 90th Infantry Division late in the afternoon as a result of a shift of boundaries to the North which gave the 90th an opportunity to force the Gerolstein crossing site by suitable infantry action.

During the morning Division Artillery moved forward to Budenheim. The bulk of the Artillery was also brought forward and shifted to the North where the full weight of all six battalions could be used to cover the planned crossing sited at Bettingen.

On March 5, CC A moved to the Budenheim-Wallersheim area. The Division Command Post moved to Rommersheim by echelon in the morning of the same day and the 56th Armored Engineer Battalion followed by the same location. Gathering up trailing elements for the long push ahead Trains Headquarters was moved to Herscheid and the 133rd Ordnance Maintenance Battalion was moved to Prum. The problem of forcing a crossing of the Kyll River and then continuing rapidly to the East was discussed by telephone early in the evening between the 4th Infantry Division and VIII Corps Headquarters. A verbal modifica-



The attack on a broad front



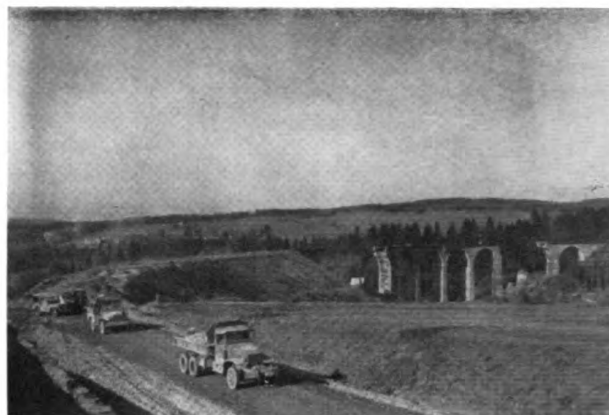
tion of the Division's mission was arrived at. This involved seizing the high ground West of the river opposite the Bettingen sites and assisting the 4th Infantry Division in the actual crossing. Consequently, at 11:30 p.m. Field Order No. 16 was issued specifying that the Division was to secure the high ground on the West bank of the Kyll River and then to pass through a bridgehead to be established by either the 4th or the 90th Infantry Division and to attack East along the Kelberg-Mayen axis to capture Andernach. Combat commands were to be abreast with CC B on the right.

OBER BETTINGEN SEIZED

At 4:35 a.m. on March 6, the second critical hill North of Oos was occupied by elements of the 4th Infantry Division. CC B resumed its attack at 6:30 a.m. Task Force Sagaser doubled back to the West through Duppach and then attacked Northeast to seize Ober Bettingen at 3:00 p.m. The enemy blew the bridge over the Kyll River as troops entered the town. Moderate resistance and rain-soaked terrain were the principal obstacles enroute.

At least 200 men of the German 5th Parachute Division were dug in on the high ground across the river and many of these men were armed with sniper rifles, limiting activity around the crossing site. However, shortly before dark dismounted infantry forded the river and forced the snipers out of their positions to establish a small bridgehead. Task force Wingard captured Nieder Bettingen at 11:00 a.m. the same day by crossing an engineer-constructed bridge at Oos and attacking Northeast through Roth and Kalenborn against only light to moderate resistance. At this point the bridge across the Kyll was found to be blown. Infantry elements waded the stream establishing a bridgehead to the South near Dohm. Two medium tank companies also forded the river successfully but the ford became impassable during the night.

Although a limited bridgehead had been established by each Task Force neither could be expanded rapidly due



The krauts blew the bridges but we got around other ways

to ruggedly wired-in positions and slushy, wet weather. Carefully laid abatis and elaborate anti-tank defenses including anti-tank ditches and mines all contributed to slowing down movement. The 5th Parachute Division defended the river line with fanatical fury using heavy tank fire, anti-tank guns and mortars during the seizure of the crossing sites and the actual crossing.

Throughout the period Division Artillery continued to support CC B, the main targets being enemy strongpoints on the East bank of the Kyll River around Hiliesheim. Up to noon 37 missions, involving the expenditure of 886 rounds were fired. Throughout the afternoon and night constant concentrated fires were maintained to cover the crossings made.

The 4th Infantry Division following on foot was scheduled to relieve CC B, expand the established bridgeheads and build a bridge at Nieder Bettingen during the night of March 6 and 7. At midnight troops for the relief had not arrived on the scene.

The Division Advance Command Post moved to Budesheim during the day and CC R moved to Fleringen arriving at 4:30 p.m. The 56th Engineer Battalion was directed to move to Oos early on March 7 to construct a bridge at Ober Bettingen.

At 8:00 p.m. that night word was received from VIII Corps stating that the 90th Infantry Division had captured Gerolstein. Work was immediately started on an alternate plan to pass CC A through the 90th Infantry Division, crossing the Kyll River at Lissingen. CC A went on a two-hour alert for this possible crossing and one platoon of Troop A, 41st Cavalry was dispatched at 11:00 p.m. to the bridge site to ford the river and reconnoiter routes to the East. Meanwhile the 90th Infantry Division Engineers were constructing a bridge over the Kyll River at Lissingen. Throughout the night CC A Engineers worked bridging craters in the road approaching the river West of Lissingen.



The Gateway to the Rhine



The 56th Armored Engineer Battalion worked feverishly during the early morning hours of March 7, 1945, to complete a bridge over the Kyll River at Ober Bettingen. The job was complicated by continuing wet weather and the bridge was still not ready for traffic at midday.

Between three or four in the morning 4th Infantry Division units relieved elements of CC B on the East side of the Kyll. The enemy counterattacked during the relief but it was successfully repulsed. A task force was organized consisting of infantry elements and two medium tank companies from CC B. Their plan was to direct attention from the bridge construction going on at Ober Bettingen so as to assist in expanding the bridgehead. The force was organized on the East side of the river opposite Dohm and was to attack North to Hillesheim, however, completion of the bridge at Lissingen altered the situation and at 1:30 p.m. CC B was ordered to stop river crossing movements and move South to follow CC A across the Kyll River in the 90th Infantry Division zone.

GEROLSTEIN CAPTURED

With the capture of Gerolstein completed on March 6, the 90th Infantry Division was able to erect a Bailey bridge across the Kyll River at Lissingen during the night, and at 6:00 a.m. CC A was ordered to march on the Lissingen bridge site and attack through the 90th Infantry Division bridgehead in the direction of Kelberg. Task Force Ahee of CC A had commenced crossing the bridge at 10:30 a.m. while the combat command passed through the lines of the 90th Infantry Division along the Lissingen-Gerolstein-Pelm axis. Unceasing spasmodic rain and snow had made a swamp of the countryside. A road block was by-passed at Pelm by taking an alternate route through Kerchweiler and Hinterweiler.

At 1:00 p.m., two miles East of Pelm, the first contact with the enemy was made. At Hinterweiler light resistance was encountered and 100 prisoners of war were taken. Mark VI and Mark IV tank were destroyed and a great many infantry killed or by-passed. Dreis and Boxberg were taken against light to moderate resistance. However, the CC A Task Force Ahee at Kelberg was not having it so lightly. This critical road center on the master ridge between the Kyll and Rhine valleys was the last hope for an enemy stand and fierce resistance in the form of nevelwerfer, mortar, automatic weapon and anti-tank fire was encountered by the Task Force. Artillery was quickly brought forward and additional infantry asked for to continue the attack and a combined tank-infantry attack, supported by artillery, was launched immediately. At 6:20 p.m. the town was seized and a complete breakthrough completed.

Enemy losses in the action included four tanks, numerous wheeled vehicles and 207 men, compared with Division

losses of five tanks and 14 casualties. Kelberg was cleared at 8:15 p.m. The night was pitch black so CC A was directed to suspend the attack for the night and in the meantime bring up all trailing elements. Temporary defensive positions were posted around the town and Company B, 63rd Armored Infantry Battalion, was sent forward a mile to the East of Hunnerbach to seize stream crossings and establish a line of departure for the next day's operations.

CC A knocked out six German tanks and captured 800 prisoners of war during the day's operation. The PW's were evacuated through Division channels. Many hundreds of enemy troops who offered to surrender were waved to the rear for evacuation by the follow-up infantry division as it was evident after the capture of Kelberg that the enemy was in a completely disorganized and confused state. However, the Germans were still capable of inflicting casualties which was proven by the action of an enemy anti-tank gun on the CC A's flank which



Checking directions

was passed by leading elements. Before the gun crew could be destroyed, it had knocked out several engineer vehicles, two light tanks, one medium tank and a halftrack of Task Force Brady.

During the afternoon CC B withdrew all troops from the East side of the Kyll River and assembled North of Budesheim. Leading elements started East from Budesheim for the Lissingen crossing about 4:00 p.m. to trail CC A. Movement was slowed down to a snail's pace because of the narrow one-road bottleneck, continuous rain and the necessity for constant road repairs. After dark vehicles had to be individually guided along the steep-banked river approach road in order to cross the several treadway bridged craters, slowing movement further.



THE BREAK THROUGH TO THE RHINE





WITH the arrival of the 4th Infantry Division Artillery a reorganization followed to comply with the support plan for the breakthrough to the Rhine. The 490th and 58th Armored Field Artillery Battalions were formed into Group Davitt and shifted to the South, accompanying CC A across the Kyll and supporting the advance from Pelms to Kelberg. The most drastic fires were laid on Kelberg during the attack and around the town after nightfall. The 333rd Field Artillery Group, including the two medium towed battalions, was detached by VIII Corps. Division Artillery Headquarters, with the 491st and 492nd Armored Field Artillery Battalions, initiated a movement across the Kyll with CC B.

Late in the day CC A was directed to stay on the route through Mayen and Andernach and CC B was ordered to turn North at, or West of, Kelberg and continue to the East on the route through Bannebach and Brohl. These changes were made due to alterations of plans. Word was received about 7:45 p.m. that the 4th Armored Division had reached the Rhine in the XII Corps zone and the 9th Armored Division had also reached the Rhine in the V Corps zone to the North.

VIII Corps issued urgent verbal orders during the evening stating that all combat elements would be moved East of the Kyll River before daylight. They moved slowly through the night in a single, long, raindrenched column as the fight against road obstacles continued. Third Army passed down insistent orders to complete the advance to the Rhine, at all costs, not later than March 8.

ORGANIZED ENEMY RESISTANCE VANISHES

The Division's exploitation was so speedy at this period that any organized enemy resistance vanished rapidly. Enemy positions that had been previously prepared were found unmanned or crushed. Thousands of Germans gathered along the axis of advance and were waved to the rear for evacuation and surrendering soldiers poured into Kelberg.

CC A moved out at daylight on March 8, 1945, with Troup A of the 41st Cavalry leading, followed up by Task Force Brady. At Beinshorn enemy resistance was encountered and was held by Troup A, 41st Cavalry, as Task Force Brady by-passed it. At 1:25 p.m. leading elements reached Mayen. At the West edge of Mayen a viaduct over the main road was blown and Task Force Brady was forced to by-pass on a cross-country route while Company A, 56th Armored Engineer Battalion, installed a treadway for the remainder of the command. Shortly after troops entered and seized the city against light resistance. At 6:15 p.m. contact was made with the 4th Armored Division, six kilometers to the East of Mayen, establishing a temporary operational boundary between divisions. The command assembled in the vicinity of Plaidt for the night while Task Force Brady was sent

toward Andernach to determine enemy dispositions. Forward elements reached Miesenheim at 11:00 p.m. and assembled there for the night.

CC B continued to move throughout the night and cleared Gerolstein at 3:00 a.m. while the bulk of the command gathered near Kirchweiler. Movement was resumed at daylight toward Kelberg following the patch of CC A.

Shortly after noon the CC B column turned North just East of Kelberg and attacked Northeast on the Mullenbach-Kempenich axis. Two enemy pillboxes were reduced and one SP gun knocked out as CC B broke through the lightly held defensive crust to the North of Kelberg pushing forward rapidly along the good road. A total of 200 prisoners of war were taken. At Nurburg a complete 200-bed German hospital unit was overrun.

ENEMY TROOPS BOTTLED UP

Enemy troops bottled up between the First and Third Armies offered heavy resistance in the vicinity of Hannebach shortly after dark. Unsuccessful attempts to bypass this resistance were made. Twenty pieces of artillery were seized intact and an enemy horse-drawn column including some 25 vehicles were overtaken, split in two, and destroyed by fire on the approach to the town. At least 1,500 prisoners were accumulated in small groups along the route during the action and marched toward Kelberg. The command was reorganized and resupplied and prepared to resume the attack at daylight the following day.

Division troops and CC R, following CC B, cleared the Kyll River by dawn. An advance Division command post was operated from Kelberg throughout the day.

At dawn on March 9, CC B resumed its attack with the command divided into two task forces. Task Force Wingard moved through Nieder Durenbach, Nieder, Zissen and Nieder Lutzingen against only slight resistance and at 12:10 a.m. reached the high ground overlooking the Rhine River near Brohl. Task Force Sagaser moved through Kempenich and Wehr to capture Burgbrohl. Resistance during the day was light and scattered, road-blocks in towns being the principal obstacles. Firing could be heard from the direction of the Remagen bridge across the Rhine River which troops of the 9th Armored Division and seized. Reconnaissance company of the 705th Tank Destroyer Battalion was sent North from Burgerohl but was unsuccessful in contacting these elements of the First Army. About 3,500 prisoners were taken during the day, including Major General Viebig, commanding general of the 227th Volksgrenadier Division and his staff. At least 100 75mm horse-drawn artillery pieces were overrun or destroyed and 50 motor transport vehicles.

Patrols returning from the outskirts of Andernach early in the morning reported that some resistance had been



encountered without the offer of surrender. A strong infantry task force was organized and at 1:30 p.m. an attack was launched. By 3:45 p.m. the West bank of Rhine river was reached through Andernach. Considerable isolated resistance was met by troops in various sectors



*Wrecked and burning German armor
in the vicinity of Doerrmoschel*

of the city. Numerous snipers were active and from the Northwest and East bank of the Rhine mortar and artillery fire rained on the city. At least 700 prisoners were captured and 500 head of horses, uncounted wagons and motor transport, and quantities of miscellaneous material which had been abandoned on the West bank of the Rhine were recovered.

After reaching Kelberg about 6:00 a.m. CC R was directed to operate a prisoner of war collecting point there. Unescorted German soldiers, walking back along the routes of advance in small groups and in lots of 100, were temporarily placed in wired enclosures and evacuation to the rear was initiated. In clearing the city a further 300 prisoners were taken. A cavalry troop was left to continue this function while CC R moved forward to Mayen during the afternoon.

Division troops, including the Division command post, arrived at Kelberg at 1:00 a.m. Supervision of the civilian authorities was promptly taken over by the Military Government. Following closely, motorized elements of the 90th Infantry Division occupied towns along the main route of advance until Mayen was reached late in the day.

Although the allowed time had been exceeded the assigned Division mission was accomplished with the seizure of Andernach. VIII Corps Operations Memo No. 30 was received at 4:00 p.m. repeating part of the assignment and calling for further local action. Seizure of bridges across the Rhine was ordered, plus lateral contact, particularly to the North, and a general clearing operation.

Brigadier General Dager arrived from the 4th Armored Division about mid-afternoon and relieved Brigadier General Kilburn as Division Commander.

ADVANCE 40 MILES IN 51 HOURS

Since leading elements of CC A started crossing the Kyll River at Lissingen on March 7, at 10:00 a.m. an advance of 40 miles in 51 hours had been made to capture Andernach on the Rhine River. From Kelberg, CC B had advanced 36 miles in 24 hours to the Rhine River at Brohl. The rapid breakthrough and exploitation action that followed overshadowed the muddy memories of hardships and delay to the Kyll River crossing. The Thunderbolts, in their first action of this type, had captured 33 towns, including Mayen and Andernach. Large and varied quantities of enemy materials were captured, destroyed or overrun. Uncounted hundreds of horse and motor transports were included in these, also 100 horse-drawn artillery pieces and six tanks. At least 10,000 prisoners of war were taken and evacuated, these coming from a large number of dissolving enemy units and including a Division Commander and his staff.

On March 10, 1945, at 5:00 a.m. VIII Corps Memorandum No. 31 was received developing the Corps mission further and covering a shift Southward of the First-Third Army boundary. All other divisions were directed to clear the assigned zones between the Kyll River and a North-South line through Mayen. In addition to the mission assigned them on March 9, the 11th Armored Division was ordered to move elements South of the new Army boundary and defend the Rhine River in the Corps zone.



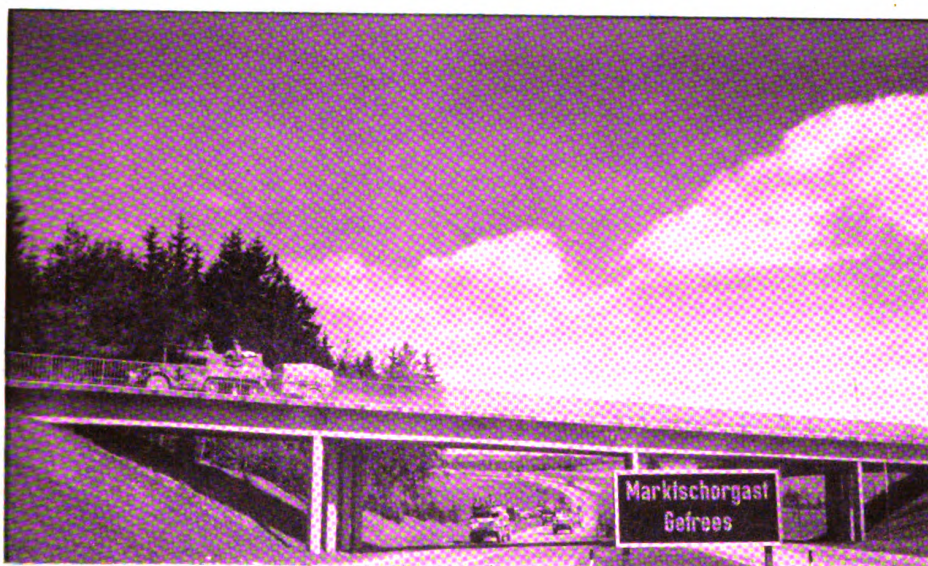
*At temporary rest in Miesenheim, Germany, men and
armored vehicles of the 63rd Inf. Bn., await the signal
to shove off for Andernach on the Rhine.*

The 11th Armored Division Operations Memo No. 32 was distributed at 10:00 A.M. confirming verbal orders issued. The division zone was parcelled out to CC A, CC B, and CC R based on current locations in order to minimize movement. CC A along the Rhine River, was directed to clear its zone, defend the river line and to



The smash to the Rhine

These prisoners couldn't believe that we were on German soil.



On the Autobahn.



Blocking a junction.



*German prisoners of war
marching along road near
the Division turnover
point.*



The medics at work.



*Civilians stand in awe at
the passing parade.*

Infantrymen follow tanks into Andernach, Germany. The soldiers behind the tank at the right are gazing toward building where a sniper has been located.



The railroad station in Andernach.

The MPs were overrun with PWs.



Infantrymen and vehicles advance through the city of Andernach. In the distance, flame and smoke rise from a burning building shattered by tank fire.



Street fighting in Andernach

As we reach the Rhine at Andernach, Nazis come forward to surrender.





maintain lateral contacts. CC B in the North and North-western portion of the zone, was also directed to clear its zone, establish and maintain contact with V Corps elements to the North, and subsequently move South to conform with the Army boundary change. CC R was charged with clearing a Southwestern zone in the division area.



On the way!

Despite the fact that a portion of the city of Andernach had been captured and occupied by CC A on the afternoon of March 9, occasional resistance by civilians and hold-out SS troops was still being put up. A large number of enemy attempted to escape across the Rhine River in barges during the early morning but direct fire from tanks destroyed the barges and drowned several hundred Germans. A small group of enemy troops on wooded high ground to the West of Andernach was liquidated. Cavalry cleared the town of Eich and by afternoon all resistance in Andernach had ceased. CC R of the 4th Armored Division on the South flank was contacted along the Rhine at Zurnette about 2:30 p.m. Rapidly accumulating prisoners continued to be evacuated and the Military Government personnel, in taking over the city government at Andernach, discovered Displaced Person slave labor camps near the city.

CC B made contact with the 2nd Infantry Division at Dedenbach around 2:00 p.m., closing the gap between the First and Third Armies. Contact was also made with the 9th Armored Division at Bad Neuenacher around 4:00 p.m. The towns of Wassenach, Wehr, Niederrissen, Bell, Kell, and Ober Durenbach were all cleared and a second German hospital unit was taken over in Maria Laach.

Towns entered and cleared by CCR were Ettringen, Ober Mendig, and Thur. The command post moved to Kottenheim at 1:00 p.m. after its clearance.

The roads from Kyll were again made serviceable after

favorable weather and considerable repair being done on them.

CCA stabilized and got the town of Andernach under control on March 11, and then cleared Nichenich, Kretz, Namady and Kruft, while CC B regrouped in preparation to moving South to its assigned area. Elements of the command systematically cleared ten towns. At 6:00 p.m. CC B was relieved by elements of V Corps at Brohl, Nieder Lutzingen, and Burgbrohl. Both major commands reported during the day that bridges across the Rhine River were not intact.

Division artillery was assigned to an area in the vicinity of Ober Mendig for later assembly. The woods between Ettringen and Ober Mendig were cleared by CC R.



This is the first tank crew of the U. S. Third Army to reach the Rhine in the breakthrough. Aboard the tank are: Cpl. William Hasse, Palisades Park, N. J.; Pvt. Marvin Aldridge, Burlington, N.C.; T/4 John Latini, Bronx, N.Y.; Cpl. Vincent Morreale, Trenton, N.J.; Cpl. Sidney Meyer, Bronx, N.Y.

The Division command post was moved from Mayen at 3:00 p.m. on March 11, and opened an hour later at Nieder Mendig. Train Headquarters and the 133rd Ordnance Maintenance Battalion arrived at Nieder Mendig about 11:30 a.m., the 81st Medical Battalion moved to Ober Mendig, and the 56th Armored Engineer Battalion continued its move to Ettringen during the afternoon, completing the concentration of Division control and service elements.

MOVING SOUTHWARD

CC A completed clearing its zone at noon on March 12, and established a command post at Kruft about four hours later. CC B cleared Engeln, Galenberg, Kempenich and Forhich, completing the clearance of its zone at 12:25 a.m. and capturing approximately 100 prisoners of war. At the same time relieved troops were moved into the prescribed area South of the new Army boundary.



CC R completed clearing its area before noon and concentrated in and about Kottenheim. The 491st Armored Field Artillery Battalion assembled in Rieden at 2:10 p.m. and the 492nd Armored Field Artillery Battalion arrived at Ober Mendig shortly afterward. At 2:30 p.m. Division Artillery Headquarters also moved into Ober Mendig. The 490th and 58th Armored Field Artillery Battalions continued to support the defense along the Rhine River line. Headquarters VII Corps Operations Memo No. 32, received at 4:00 p.m. directed the relief of the Thunderbolts along the Rhine by the 6th Cavalry Group on the North and the 87th Infantry Division on the South. This expansion of the Corps zone to the South along the Moselle River indicated an impending action to seize Coblenz, where the Moselle and Rhine Rivers meet.

The 11th Armored Division, upon being relieved, was to assemble in the Corps reserve, maintaining contact with the First Army on the North flank and protecting the Corps North flank. Also, all the cities, towns, and villages within the assigned divisional area were to be checked periodically to be cleared of enemy stragglers. The assigned division assembly area was generally in the vicinity of Nieder Mendig.



This gun (approx. 250-mm) was abandoned by the Germans between Kelberg and Mayen.

Operations Memo No. 33 issued at 8:30 p.m. on March 12, allocated the major assembly areas and assigned tactical responsibilities. CC A was to return Company B of the 55th Armored Infantry Battalion to CC B and elements of the 41st Cavalry with the exception of Troop A was to go to CC R. CC B was directed to maintain contact with the 2nd Infantry Division to the North and to protect the Corps North flank. Division Artillery, minus the 491st Armored Field Artillery Battalion, was to support the Rhine River line defense.

The following day found CC A still occupying Andernach and maintaining patrols along the river front throughout

the morning. Occasional contacts were made with the 4th Armored Division on the South flank. The 6th Cavalry Group relieved elements along the Rhine River at 1:30 p.m.

CC B kept in contact with the 2nd Infantry Division on the North and Company B rejoined the 55th Armored Infantry Division at 8:00 p.m.

At 3:45 p.m. CC R moved to its Langenfold-Kirchesch-Waldesch assembly area and contacts were established with the 55th Armored Infantry Battalion and the 22nd Tank Battalion prior to assuming jurisdiction over these troops. Approximately 500 rounds were fired on targets of opportunity by Group Davitt who continued to support the Rhine River defense operation. Division Artillery moved up into position to coordinate and reinforce the defense with two additional battalions.



A dead horse and wrecked German armored equipment lie by the roadside in Andernach, Germany.

The Division completed its assembly in the Corps reserve on March 14, 1945, maintaining contact with the 2nd Infantry Division on the North. CC A's 63rd Armored Infantry Battalion moved to Thru at 1:05 p.m.

CONTACT WITH FIRST ARMY

The 490th Armored Field Artillery Battalion fired on 50 infantry personnel and three machine guns East of the Rhine, destroyed the guns and inflicting severe casualties. The plan for the Third Army operation to follow began to show as information was received from adjacent units. Contacts made with the First Army in the North were being solidified from the Kyll to the Rhine. To the South, between the Moselle and the Rhine, a large pocket separating the Third and Seventh Armies remained to be liquidated before the Rhineland Campaign could actually be called complete. Third Army's XII Corps was already in the process of crossing the Moselle River in the Neighborhood of Treis. VIII Corps on the North flank was



also turning to the Southeast, meanwhile the 11th Armored Division planned and prepared for what was sure to be a significant part of this operation.

At 9:45 a.m. on March 15, VIII Corps Field Order No. 15, dated March 14, 10:30 p.m., was received. The order directed the 87th Infantry Division to make an H-hour



Division Headquarters

D-day attack to capture Coblenz. The 11th Armored Division was to remain in Corps Reserve and prepare plans to repel any counterattacks within the Corps zone or from the North flank.

Divisional units were principally engaged in rehabilitation and maintenance activities. CC A's 42nd Tank Battalion moved into the assembly area at Ettringen and CC B completed movement into its area and opened its command post at Ober Mendig. Division Artillery, supporting the 6th Cavalry Group, fired 16 missions, expending 225 rounds. During the day enemy aircraft were active in the area but no casualties were received.

At mid-day on March 15, major unit control over all troops assigned the previous day were made effective. CC A was charged with the responsibility for repelling any counterattacks in the Corps zone and CC B for repelling all possible counterattacks from the North flank.

A telephone message from VIII Corps at 10:35 a.m. on March 16, informed the Division that it was on a four-hour alert status for movement, and directed the G-3 report to Headquarters XII Corps for instructions. XII Corps then advised G-3 that the Thunderbolts would pass to its control at noon for a breakthrough and exploitation operation, involving a push to the Rhine River at Worms and a crossing of the Moselle River at Bullay.

From North to South XII Corps had under its control the 2nd Cavalry Group, 90th Infantry Division, 4th Armored Division, 5th Infantry Division, 89th Infantry Division, and the 76th Infantry Division. The Corps mission was



One of the 42nd Tank Bn. Lights takes a vacation

to seize the West bank of the Rhine River between Mainz and Worms. At the time the 11th Armored Division was attached, the 4th Armored Division had broken through the enemy's defenses South of the Moselle River and was approaching Bad Krouznach with the mission of seizing Mainz. The 5th Infantry Division was mopping up following the 4th Armored Division and the 90th Infantry Division on the left and the 89th Infantry Division on the right had small bridgeheads established over the Moselle River. XX Corps was situated on the XII Corps South flank.

CROSSING THE MOSELLE

The 11th Armored Division was directed to cross the Moselle River at Bullay beginning at midday on March 17, pass through the 89th Infantry Division's bridgehead, and operate on the right of the 4th Armored Division to seize Worms on the Rhine and any bridges across the Rhine which were left intact. The 555th Infantry Regiment of the 89th Infantry Division was placed under operational control of the Division for close follow-up purposes. The 33rd Field Artillery Brigade, composed of the 58th, 945th, and 775th Field Artillery Battalions was directed to reinforce the Division.

It was necessary for the 11th Armored Division to move 40 kilometers to the South that night on an assembly area near Lutserath and Buchel, in order to carry out this plan. At 2:00 p.m. major unit commanders were warned verbally of the general plan and a march order was issued. The only change in the composition of troops was the attachment of the 490th Armored Field Artillery Battalion and Troup B, Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron to CC A, and the 491st Armored Field Artillery Battalion and Troup C, 41st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron to CC B.

Operations Memo No. 36 was issued at 7:00 p.m. outlining the plan for the river crossing and attack. The operation zone assigned the Division for its second break-



through to the Rhine was from 20 to 25 kilometers wide. Extending Southeast from the Moselle River 40 kilometers to the Nahe River, the zone then turned East for 70 kilometers to the Rhine and Worms. The Nahe, Glan, and Alsenze River lines were assigned as intermediate successive objectives. Two axes of advance were chosen, along which the entire Division was to be employed in a balanced block formation. The routes chosen were designed to allow for mutual, following ridges, avoiding villages and favoring a firm footing wherever practicable. CC A was directed to attack Southeastward along its axis, protect the left flank of the Division and seize the bridges across the Rhine found to be intact and CC B was to attack along a parallel axis, seize Worms and also take any bridges found intact.



Artillery lines the road on the outskirts of smoldering Obernust, Germany

Division Artillery with the 492nd Armored Field Artillery Battalion and the 945th Field Artillery Battalion was directed to provide general support for CC B while the 33rd Field Artillery Brigade was placed in support of CC A. CC R was prepared for clearing bypassed areas and to protect the exposed Division South flank. Advancing along both axes the 355th Regimental Combat Team prepared to mop bypassed areas, or to seize and secure critical intermediate river crossing points. Following CC B, the 41st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron was prepared to establish and maintain liaison with the 10th Armored Division of XX Corps on the Division's right flank.

Coordinated with the 89th Infantry Division, a detail traffic control plan was set up to insure unimpaired movement across the Moselle River at Bullay bridge. In order to streamline the Division during the breakthrough, major units were directed to allow only A trains East of the Moselle River, with B trains prepared to follow up on order.

At 5:00 p.m. on March 16 the march to the Lutzerath-Buchel assembly area commenced. The column was

strafed by enemy fighter bombers while forming. CC A lead out and the 33rd Field Artillery Brigade joined in behind. The Division command post following next in line left Nieder Mendig at 9:00 p.m. CC B, Division Artillery, 41st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, CC R, and Division control and supporting troops, in order, joined the line of march. Extreme darkness impeded the night march, with heavy counter-marching military traffic, the narrow streets through towns and steep grades through the Endert River canyon further complicating the procedure. CC A stopped for the night near Driesch and the command post opened there at 9:05 p.m.



We by-pass a German town (Doerrmoschel) left in flames

The Division's major elements completed assembly in the Lutzerath-Buchel area during the early morning hours of March 17. Final preparations for the Moselle River crossing and a second breakthrough to the Rhine River were started immediately. CC A completed its move at 1:30 a.m., CC B at 6:30 a.m., and CC R at 10:00 a.m.

To insure a smooth river crossing the Engineers established a radio network and Military Police guard setup for traffic control through the Bullay bridge site bottleneck. The route to Bullay was reported clear at 11:15 a.m. and the 11th Armored Division was assured it would have road priority through the infantry elements South of the river at midday.

INTO THE MOSELLE RIVER VALLEY

CC A started rolling into the Moselle River valley towards Bullay at 11:30 p.m. The entire command cleared the bridge by 3:00 p.m. Despite some traffic delay due to assembly area regrouping.

Elements of the German 159th and 246th Volksgrenadier Divisions manned a series of well selected roadblock defense positions along the Division front.

About 4:00 p.m. CC A was directed to continue its attack as far as Gemunden and CC B was to set Rhaunen



as its goal for the day. The Third Army relayed verbal orders down to the Division at 5:20 p.m. ordering the Thunderbolts to continue the attack as far as possible that night. The order was subsequently issued to both CC A and CC B.

CC B made the first contact at Altay about 3:30 p.m. The town was passed through by reducing a roadblock and high ground gained East of the Moselle River valley. Lauzenhausen was seized at 4:00 p.m. Shortly thereafter the command was delayed by a blown railroad underpass and small arms fire near Buchenbeuren. A long, steep bank, cut perpendicular to the axis of advance made an



This captured gun gave us no more trouble.

obstacle around which maneuver was prohibited. Dis-mounted infantry, supported by artillery and tank fire, attacked across the obstacle. They pushed South to clear the woods beyond and established a small bridgehead after dark. The Engineers made repairs on the blown bridge while the remainder of the command reorganized and prepared for the next day's operation.

During the day Troop C, 41st Cavalry, was released to Squadron control and Company C, 56th Armored Engineer Battalion was attached.

Meanwhile, CC A had moved Troop B, 41st Cavalry, ahead with CC B's column to establish contact along CC A's axis of advance. The remainder of the command started for the bridge at 2:40 p.m. The head of the column climbed out of the Moselle valley to reach Kappen at 3:40 p.m. after passing through the 89th Infantry Division bridge-head. No resistance was met.

KIRCHBERG

Kirchberg was approached at 4:45 p.m. where the first resistance, consisting of a defended roadblock and enemy infantry in the woods three kilometers to the North, held up the advance. However, by 5:45 p.m. all resistance had been overcome. The command post opened at Kappel at

7:30 p.m. Kludenbach was captured during the night, patrols were sent into Kirchberg and trailing elements climbed slowly out of the Moselle valley and coiled for the night in the vicinity of Kappel.

Although officially under Division control for concentrated emergency use, Division Artillery and the 33rd Field Artillery Brigade, to all intents and purposes operated as organic elements of the two major commands, commencing with the Moselle River crossing. Division Artillery integrated into the CC B column, closing into positions at 4:00 p.m. The 33rd Field Artillery Brigade, followed the CC A column, went into positions in the vicinity of Kappel after nightfall.



Abandoned Kraut equipment.

The 41st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, on reaching the high ground East of the Moselle, swung South from the CC B route and made an advance along a separate route on the South flank of the Division, seizing Lotzburen at 5:12 p.m. and Wahlenau against only light resistance. CC R made its river crossing movement at 8:00 p.m., reached Bullay about 10:45 p.m. and was still enroute at midnight. All elements of the Division had crossed the Moselle River at the end of the day and were headed for open country beyond the 89th Infantry Division bridgehead. Resuming the attack at 6:00 a.m. on March 18, 1945, both CC A and CC B advanced rapidly throughout the day. Resistance increased during the day, varying from isolated sniper activity to scattered heavy mortar, small arms, artillery and anti-tank fire.

CC A's leading Cavalry elements, on the Northeast flank, passed through Kirchberg without incident and first encountered resistance of intense mortar fire near Dicken-sheid. This was quickly neutralized by artillery fire and progress was resumed over an alternate route to the East, with Task Force Ahee in the lead. The command reached Gehweiler at 9:25 a.m. where the direct fire of two 150 mm guns, nebelwerfer, small arms, and mortar fire was encoun-



Mopping up

tered. While tanks neutralized the heavy weapon fire, infantry elements cleared Gehlweiler. Blown bridges were bypassed at Gemunden and Gehlweiler as CC A continued the advance. Lateral contact was established with the 5th Infantry Division forces North of Gemunden at 11:10 a.m. Light resistance was met at Kellenbach when it was entered at 2:20 p.m. The command's progress was slowed near Dhaun where two blocks, created by blasting the hillside into the road, hindered the advance until 5:00 p.m. when dismounted infantry bypassed the obstacles to enter Simmern. The day's progress was completed when, at 8:00 p.m., the town was cleared and the high ground dominating Simmern and the Nahe River was secured.

Meanwhile, in the CC B sector, engineers completed laying a treadway across the blown railroad underpass at Buchenbeuren in time to permit resumption of the attack at 6:00 a.m. Gosenrother was reached at 6:55 a.m. As CC B's advanced elements pushed through a deep canyon approaching Rhaunen a stiff local action developed. The command forced the enemy to retreat and then overtook the fleeing German column as it climbed out of the canyon to the South of Rhaunen. Twenty miscellaneous vehicles were destroyed, plus several anti-tank and 20 mm anti-aircraft guns. One hundred German prisoners were taken. After side-stepping the main canyon road for a ridge route to the Southwest, Sulzbach was taken at 9:15 a.m. and three hours later Griebelscheid was also seized. Bergan was seized at 3:30 p.m. to place the command on dominating terrain overlooking Kirn and the Nahe River.

It was found that German demolition squads had destroyed bridges over the Nahe River before considerable enemy troops and transport had been able to cross. This gave the command a good opportunity to clear the area quickly, so, capitalizing on the enemy's misfortune, a fighter-bomber strike, coordinated on the ground by CC B's Tactical Air Liaison Officer, was able to destroy scores of German horses, horse-drawn transport, motor vehicles and



A few days rest

enemy soldiers in the narrow, congested streets of Kirn. Following up the air strike, CC B assaulted Kirn from the Southwest to complete the round-up of hundreds of disorganized and demoralized forces isolated there. Meanwhile another air strike was directed against retreating enemy horse-drawn transport columns to the East of the Nahe River inflicting devastating results.

MOPPING UP IN KIRN

At 7:00 p.m. tanks and infantry began mopping up in Kirn. Covered by artillery fire, dismounted elements crossed the river in order to protect the bridge site for engineer repair work. These forces were relieved during the night by following elements of the attached 355th Infantry Regiment. Late in the afternoon reconnaissance elements located a ford across the Nahe River to the East of Kirn-sulzbach and at 6:20 p.m. a small task force crossed the river to establish a bridgehead and secure the high ground to the South of Kirn. This completed the day's action for CC B.

Meanwhile, the 4th Armored Division on the left flank had successfully assaulted Bad Kreuznach and established crossings over the Nahe River at several points. The 10th Armored Division on the right was reported to have progressed from the vicinity of Kirkenfeld to Baumholder, also across the Nahe. The 89th Infantry Division to the rear had been ordered to resume its advance late in the day, mopping up the Division zone.

The 41st Cavalry Reconnaissance who were progressing slowly on the Division's Southwest flank reported no contact during the morning, meanwhile, the two troops released the night before from CC A and CC B were rejoining. Hottenbach was reached at noon. The Squadron was temporarily blocked at 4:25 p.m. by a blown bridge near Herrstein and much abandoned horse-drawn equipment there gave evidence of the enemy's retreat. The squadron



pushed forward to reach the Nahe River near Fischbach at 8:15 p.m., only to find another bridge blown. A command post was established at Herrstein for the night.

CC R, following CC B's axis of advance, completed its river crossing march to an assembly area near Hahn, and at 2:00 p.m. bounded forward to Laufersweiler for the night. The 705th Tank Destroyer Battalion completed its march across the Moselle to Atlay at 6:50 a.m. and remained in location with reconnaissance out to the Southwest for protection of the Division rear throughout the day.

When no release came through from XII Corps directing the attack to continue, plans were made late in the evening to gather up the Division along the Nahe River line while the major commands were completing the establishment of a solid bridgehead for the following day. Elements of the 355th Combat Team which were following CC A and CC B were attached to these major units for closer coordination of action. The 41st Cavalry was directed to attempt lateral contact with the 10th Armored Division at Baumholder. CC R was ordered forward to Greibelscheid, Division Troops were to be moved forward to Kirm, at least, and Division Trains were to come forward at Kirchberg.

The Division had made a 25 kilometer advance during the day, an undetermined amount of enemy material had been destroyed and 700 prisoners taken. Two German Panzer Divisions and the 9th, 79th, and 559th Volksgrenadier Divisions were added to the bedraggled units in contact. Demolished bridges and strong positions on dominating terrain South of the Nahe River indicated that the enemy would put up a decisively strong defense on the following day.

At 1:35 a.m. on March 19, a message was received from XII Corps directing the attack to continue but shifting the Division's final objective to the West bank of the Rhine River to the South of Worms. It was the 4th Armored Division's mission to seize Worms proper and the West bank of the Rhine, North of the city. The 90th Infantry Division was to take up the attack on Mains. The Corps also specified that the 11th Armored Division was not to advance beyond a lane between Oberweisen-Kirchheim Bolanden-Mornheim-Ballheim and Eisenberg until released by further orders from the Corps. CC A and CC B were advised of the order and CC B was warned of a possible diversion to assist CC A in crossing the Nahe River.

CC B made a spectacular drive during the day of more than 30 kilometers, being greatly assisted by well coordinated fighter-bomber support operating immediately in front of the armor.

CROSSING THE NAHE RIVER

Remaining combat elements of CC B, led by the 491st Armored Field Artillery Battalion, started crossing the

Nahe River at 4:40 a.m., utilizing the Kirnsulzbach ford. At day-light the attack was resumed. The spearheading 41st Tank Battalion, pushing forward rapidly against air strike softened resistance, seized Schmidhachenbach at 8:00 a.m. and gained the high ground to the South of the Nahe River around the West flank of the enemy defense position. So, in breaking through the last strong position the enemy had time to man, progress was quickened as the exploitation began. Hundsbach at 9:57 a.m. and Raumbach at 11:15 a.m. were passed through in rapid succession. Meisenheim and the first bridge found intact across the Glan River fell at 12:15 a.m. As leading elements entered Gangloff at 12:45 a.m. orders were received to hold up the attack with the view toward assisting CC A. Approximately 1,000 German troops, principally from the 352nd Volksgrenadier Division, were overtaken in the area and a request was made for assistance to handle them.



The M P's start the "last roundup"

CC B was ordered to resume attack at 1:00 p.m. when it was sure that CC A was fording combat elements until a bridge across the Nahe River could be constructed. The enemy found no time for manning roadblocks or blowing further bridges as several air strikes added to the confusion and destruction of other rapidly retreating enemy columns. Pushing ahead over side ridge roads, CC B seized the town of Nusbach at 3:30 p.m. and Rudolphkirchen fell 45 minutes later. Rockenhausen on the Alsenz River was seized and cleared at 5:50 p.m., a second bridge was found to be intact and the locality was secured. The command then commenced to coil for the night.

Upon clearing a roadblock North of Simmern about 1:00 a.m. and completing a treadway bridge, CC A's Task Force Ahee moved into the town for the remainder of the night. At daylight small forces were dispatched in an effort to seize crossings over the Nahe River. At 7:45 a.m. an attempt was made to rush the bridge as a lead 1/4 ton truck of the 42nd Tank Battalion Reconnaissance Platoon was making the crossing.



Meanwhile, the bulk of CC A was concentrating in reducing an enemy pocket still holding out in the vicinity of Rohrbach.

The advance resumed about 11:00 a.m. when Task Force Ahee forded the stream with full-track vehicles near Martinstein. The heavy mortar fire encountered was neutralized by artillery. Fighting its way down the Nahe River valley and through the main enemy defense line at Herxheim,



A short rest.

the task force advanced up and out of the valley to the Southeast, all the way encountering heavy direct fire from anti-tank guns, small arms, and automatic weapons. When Meisenheim was reached about 4:35 p.m. contact was made with elements of CC B. CC A's Task Force Brady started fording the Nahe River at 4:05 p.m., mounting its personnel on full-track-laying vehicles, and then continued along the axis of advance securing towns in the rear of Task Force Ahee. A 96-foot treadway bridge was completed across the Nahe River near Martinstein at 9:40 p.m. and then wheeled traffic started moving across it through the night.

MORE PRISONERS

CC R, following the axis of CC B, left Laufersweiler at 9:00 a.m. and marched to Griebelscheid, arriving at noon. A fast column of 55th Armored Infantry Battalion elements was dispatched forward to Gangloff to take over the mounting horde of German soldiers that had surrendered to CC B. The remaining elements, assisted by the 705th Tank Destroyer Battalion, cleared the towns of Raumbach, Odenbach, Rehborn, and Becherbach, along CC B's route of advance, arriving at Meisenheim at 9:00 p.m. Meanwhile, the 41st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron which was delayed at a necessary ford across the Nahe, reached Mittleideidenbach at 8:00 a.m. and advanced to Sien at midday. The Squadron then passed through Hoppstaden meeting light resistance and capturing numerous prisoners, reached Kappeln at 12:45 a.m., Medard

at 3:00 p.m. where a bridge across the Alsenz River was secured, and then on to Odenbach at 3:50 p.m. During the day's action a German medical station was overrun and captured intact at Schweinscheid. Remnants of an artillery unit equipped with four 150mm guns, and four antitank guns being hopelessly outflanked and helpless, were captured near Breitenheim at the close of the day.

The 10th Armored Division turned South during the day but made no contact. The 12th Armored Division came up from the South, however, the elements which reached Worsbach turned East during the day. The 89th Infantry Division, in the Thunderbolt's rear, completed clearing up to the Nahe River line. On the North flank, the 4th Armored Division gathered its forces East of the Nahe River and at 11:00 a.m. started an attack through Alzey towards Worms. CC B of the 4th Armored Division had reached Wendelsheim at 8:00 p.m., placing the leading elements roughly the same distance from Worms as the corresponding major unit of the 11th Armored Division. Reports from the Tactical Reconnaissance flights overhead indicated that all the bridges across the Rhine in the Division zone had been blown.

The Division command post was retained at Kirchberg during the day in order to maintain constant contact with XII Corps. While all hoped for a release to continue the attack all the way to the Rhine it did not materialize. Information from XII Corps showed that the restraining line would not be lifted until a clear-cut lead over the 4th Armored Division could be established, or, until further progress coordinated with the 4th Armored Division



This guy said "uncle".

advance. CC A and CC B were issued verbal orders to continue the advance as far as the restraining line on the following day.

During the day the 56th Armored Engineer Battalion supervised bridge building at Kirn and Martinstein but a Bailey Bridge which had been ordered did not reach Kirn until 3:00 p.m. At 11:30 p.m. no estimate of the finishing



time could be given so CC B trains were diverted to the Kirnsulzbach ford. The material for the Bailey Bridge was requested at higher headquarters and much valuable time was lost which allowed the enemy enough slack to demolish more bridges while the Bailey and treadway material was being brought up from hundreds of miles to the rear. It was necessary to install treadways in a dozen places along CC A's route of advance so as to accommodate wheeled traffic, including the Nahe River bridge.

Train Headquarters arrived at Kirchberg at 10:15 a.m. and the 133rd Ordnance Maintenance Battalion followed arriving at 2:00 p.m. The 81st Medical Battalion moved to Rhaunen.

ENEMY DEFENSE SMASHED

The Division encountered heavy demolition during the days actions, anti-tank guns, mortars, bazookas, nebelwerfer, and some 4.7mm rockets were fired as the enemy tried desperately to defend the Nahe River line. Literally thousands of German soldiers were overrun and captured from 13 general headquarters and 14 separate divisional units. The complete disruption of the enemies defensive dispositions became evident late in the day when bridges were captured intact, units surrendered en masse, and artillery and medical units were overrun.

The command post started forward from Kirchberg at 8:30 a.m. on March 20, 1945, so as it could maintain absolutely essential contact with advance combat elements. The command had been holding communications with the Corps intact as long as possible, in the hopes of a lift order on the restraining line. There was also a good prospect of reestablishing Corps contact at Meisenheim. A report from CC B at 11:15 a.m., received enroute, indicated arrival on the restraining line at 11:04 a.m. A further report was received from CC A at 12:15 a.m. indicating their arrival on the restraining line at 11:35 a.m.



*"You take the high road and I'll take the low road"
One vehicle fords river south of Kirn, Germany, while
another vehicle uses the bridge*

When these facts were reported to XII Corps a release was obtained to continue to the Rhine River South of Worms. This was provided only if the route from Alzey to Worms, reserved for the 4th Armored Division, was not crossed, or unless the 4th was unable to make any progress. At 12:45 a.m., about the time of arrival at Meisenheim, orders were given to CC A to continue the attack along the alternate Southern routes which had been designated the night before. CC R was ordered forward to Rockenhausen to clear the main supply route and to protect the Division rear, pending the follow-up action of the 89th Infantry Division. CC R, followed by the Forward Echelon and Division Troops, moved to Winnweiler at 3:00 p.m. and at 6:00 p.m. the command post was established there for the night. All artillery was ordered forward within range of the Rhine River at 9:00 p.m. as the present situation indicated possible sharp action to clear the West bank on the following morning.

March 20, also brought continued relentless advances against isolated local resistance offered by a highly disorganized and confused enemy.

The gathering of forces at Meisenheim was further delayed when remnants of enemy forces situated on the high ground South of the Nahe River attacked rejoining elements of CC A during the night. About 2:00 a.m. a command post was established at Meddersheim for the night. CC A's Task Force Ahee, resuming its attack at 7:00 a.m., followed CC B's route to Rockenhausen and then moved unimpeded through a dangerous gap between two high wooded hills, until reaching Dannefels at 11:05 a.m. where stubborn resistance was met. Dismounted infantry attacked while Artillery and Tank fire neutralized roadblocks which were defended by infantry with anti-tank guns. While the 1st Battalion of the 355th Regimental Combat Team was catching up with Task Force Ahee, it was engaged by dug-in enemy on the high ground dominating the axis of advance just West of Dannefels. Both local actions were successful.

TO MONSHEIN

Elements of Task Force Ahee then turned South through Jacobsweiler and Steinbach and established a lateral contact with CC B. Dreisen was reached at 11:35 a.m. by advanced elements where contact was again made with CC B and arrival at the Corps restraining line was reported. Resuming the advance Marnheim was seized and passed through and Albsheim was taken by 3:47 p.m. A blown bridge was encountered North of Harxheim which was defended and could not be bypassed. Continuing East, just North of the Prfimm River, and through scattered resistance, contact was made with elements of the 4th Armored Division just North of Monsheim where a bridge was also found to be blown. Conforming with XII Corps orders to stay South of the main route into Worms further progress to East was halted. Turning South the infantry crossed the Prfimm and seized Monsheim. Engineers



spanned the river by 10:30 p.m. and the remainder of Task Force Ahee closed in Monsheim. Remaining elements of CC A cleared and assembled for the night in the Mannheim-Albisheim-Harmbeim area.

Because of CC B's long run the previous day, and the lack of bridges behind it to bring forward trains, resupplying and refueling was delayed until early morning. Starting movement at 9:00 a.m., attack elements crossed the Alsenz River and advanced rapidly reaching Winnweiler at 9:31 a.m. Boorstadt at 10:40 a.m., and Dreisen at 10:50 a.m. where lateral contact with CC A was established. Reaching the restraining line near Gollheim at 10:55 a.m. the command paused and on order at 2:00 p.m. resumed its attack with the mission of capturing the airfield South of Worms. Pushing forward swiftly, Lauderheim was seized at 3:55 p.m., and Heppenheim taken at 6:00 p.m. After seizing and clearing favorable terrain two kilometers South of Horchheim at 6:25, which was within four kilometers of the Rhine River, CC B coiled for the night and prepared for a decisive attack on the airport the following morning.

During the morning, CC R scoured the Gangloff area, at the same time rounding up an additional 225 German soldiers. Continuing forward on its mop-up mission along the CC B route, an enemy hold-out pocket was discovered in some woods North of Ginsweiler, this netted a further 91 prisoners. As it progressed clearing Nussbach, Rudolphskirchen, Dormoschel and Dornbach, a total of 604 more prisoners of war were captured. At 7:00 p.m. the command post was established in Rockenhausen.

The 41st Cavalry advanced rapidly, beginning at 7:00 a.m. against light resistance. Elements of the 12th Armored Division were contacted in Hefersweiler at 11:15 a.m., and the 94th Infantry Division in Lonsfeld at 1:00 p.m. The Squadron seized Ramsen at 1:50 p.m. and forward elements reached the road center of Grunstadt along the Corps boundary at 6:00 p.m. A command post was established at Eisenberg about 6:00 p.m. and 903 prisoners of war were captured during the day.

The 705th Tank Destroyer Battalion, following CC R and clearing assigned towns, moved slowly East and reached Dormoschel at 5:30 p.m.

The 4th Armored Division entered and seized Worms at 1:35 a.m. on March 21, 1945.

The Thunderbolts completed their assigned mission at 8:00 a.m. on March 21, when CC B took the airport South of Worms and reached the West bank of the Rhine River in a brief, sharp action. The command launched a combined arms assault on the final objective at 7:00 a.m. and the defending German garrison gave way as CC B's forces converged rapidly on the large military installation. Mopping-up operations were commenced



Artillery radioman at Audenall, Germany

immediately after the fall of the airport and were completed within an hour. Although there was considerable air activity from the enemy it failed to influence the action. XII Corps Operational Directive No. 91, was received at 9:55 a.m., outlining plans for clearing the Corps zone of all remaining resistance and directing regroupment of Corps troops in preparation for an early crossing of the Rhine River. The 11th Armored Division was directed to clear all enemy from its zone East of the Glan River and to make preparations for an assembly West of the Alsenz River. The 355th Regimental Combat Team was to be released to the 89th Infantry Division. The Division was also ordered to relieve elements of the 4th Armored Division in Worms and vicinity without delay and not to interfere with the withdrawal of the 4th from Worms. CC B, coordinating with the order, was directed to establish immediate contact with, and relieve the 4th in Worms as early as practicable, and to clear the city.

ENTERING WORMS

At 2:00 p.m. Operations Memo No. 40 was received confirming the morning's order. CC A was charged with cleaning a zone along the South flank as far West as the Alsenz River. CC R, strengthened by the 705th Tank Destroyer Battalion, was ordered to complete clearing the Division zone between the Glan and Alsenz Rivers.

Contact with the 4th Armored Division was established and CC B entered Worms at 12:05 a.m. The ruined city was cleared of some 200 unresisting enemy soldiers but no elements of the 4th were discovered there. The city was in shambles and unfit for occupancy. Consequently all elements of the command moved South and West of Worms to assemble near Weinsheim. When villages in the area were cleared late in the afternoon a further 100 prisoners were taken.

CC A continued clearing its area of remaining German soldiers in the morning and by noon 14 towns had been



thoroughly cleared and searched. The 1st Battalion of the 355th Infantry and Company A of the 285th Engineer Battalion were released to their parent units at noon, and the 33rd Field Artillery Brigade ceased supporting CC A's operations at 2:00 p. m. Towns cleared during the afternoon were, Gauerheim, Albiheim, Herxheim, Bennhausen, Jacobsweiler, Steinbach, Kaudersheim, Kindersheim, and Weitersweiler. CC A's command post moved forward from Marnheim, arriving at Molsheim at 5:15 p.m. The command captured an estimated 300 prisoners during the day.



The Watch on the Rhine

Moving forward, CC R continued mopping up towns and intermittened woods. While clearing some 32 towns CC R captured 348 prisoners of war in addition to many small arms, and automatic weapons.

The enemy attempted an early morning air attack but it proved more costly than favorable to them as the 575th Anti-aircraft Battalion destroyed one ME 109 and dam-

aged two others near Worms, driving off fighter aircraft before any damage could be done to Division troops.

Since crossing the Moselle on March 17, the Division's four-day engagement had produced noteworthy results. CC A, although trailing CC B for ten miles, had advanced 44 miles in 48 hours and had passed through 23 towns. CC B had advanced 48 miles in 48 hours and passed through 36 towns to the Rhine River South of Worms. The 41st Cavalry had advanced 55 miles in 48 hours, passing through 20 towns. At least 12,000 prisoners of war were captured. Hundreds of irreplaceable enemy motor vehicles and horse-drawn transport were destroyed, numerous heavy weapons and a few tanks had been knocked out or overrun and captured.

When the pocket at Moselle had been liquidated the Third Army impatiently regrouped for a crossing of the Rhine River. The First Army's bridgehead to the North had been expanded to a point where the main Rhine Valley, East of the River, had been cut. By crossing the Rhine between Mainz and Worms, pushing East to Hanau, and then North in the direction of Giessen, another juncture of the First Army would seal off the Industrial area of Frankfurt and a long stretch of the Rhine River.

The master plan involved a defense of the river line from Mainz North to Coblenz by VIII Corps; a central zone crossing of the Rhine between Mainz and Oppenheim and a subsequent attack East to Hanau and North to Geissen by the XII Corps; and an initial defense of the River line from Oppenheim South to Worms by the XX Corps.

At 5:25 a.m. on March 22, the Corps directed the Division to move one of its organic artillery battalions to Hillensheim to be attached to Corps Artillery before 1:00 p.m.



OVER THE RHINE





Corps Operational Directive No. 92 was received at 6:23 a.m., exacting plans for the regroupment of the Corps units and also directing preparations for a Rhine River crossing. The Thunderbolts were to hold the West bank of the river until relieved by elements of the XX Corps and after that to assemble in the general vicinity of Obermoschel-Meisenheim-Sobornheim and Bad Kreuznach, in the Corps Reserve. Air operations, already well planned, were placed in charge of the 33rd Field Artillery Brigade. During the day major units completed clearing operations in their assigned zones. CC A working from West to East, completed its zone at 3:00 p.m., establishing lateral contact with CC B and the 4th Armored Division to the North. CC B operated patrols along the West bank of the river and throughout its zone. The 94th Infantry Division relieved attached 41st Cavalry elements of a portion of the river front at 6:00 p.m. CC R completed its mission at 10:45 a.m., clearing 12 towns and considerable wooded area, plus rounding up an additional 123 prisoners of war.



Rebuilding a mined Bridge

The final plans for the proposed river crossing were outlined in XII Corps Field Order No. 17 which was received in the early evening. An attack across the Rhine River was directed to seize a bridgehead near Oppenheim. The 90th Infantry Division on the North flank was to simulate river crossing preparations Northwest of Mainz. The 89th Infantry Division was directed to assemble in a concentration area Northwest of Oppenheim, and to be prepared to assist in expanding the 5th Infantry Division's bridgehead. Supporting the river crossing from the South flank was the 4th Armored Division. The order directed the Thunderbolts to move to a newly located assembly area near Alzey and to be prepared to cross the Rhine and attack to the Northeast.

SURPRISE RIVER CROSSING

The surprise river crossing at Oppenheim made by the 5th Infantry Division was progressing satisfactorily and by early morning of March 23, a full regiment had crossed the river in boats and temporary ferries.

Early the same day the Division was directed to relieve without delay the 4th Armored Division along the West bank of the Rhine South of the expanding bridgehead, while the 4th assembled on the East side of the Rhine. The Division was ordered to place Tank Destroyers and 76mm high velocity direct fire guns along the West bank so as to destroy any enemy floating demolitions that might destroy the bridge which was about to be constructed. By 6:00 p.m. the Division had completed the relief of the 4th Armored Division and assumed responsibility for its new sector.

Under cover of darkness Corps Engineers commenced construction of a pontoon bridge across the Rhine at Oppenheim.

At 5:00 a.m. on March 24, 1945, the XII Corps pontoon bridge was completed. Although considerably harrassed by enemy air activity the 5th Infantry Division had managed to complete its crossing and by early morning one regiment of the 90th Infantry Division had crossed.

The Division continued to concentrate in the Alzey area, patrolling the West bank of the Rhine river in its zone and destroying by fire all floating objects that might have impaired the continuous operation of the Oppenheim bridge. At 11:15 a. m. the 11th Armored Division was released from XII Corps and passed to the control of XX Corps but the existing Division mission was to continue until such time as relief could be effected by XV Corps. The CC A command post opened at Winterscheid about 10:00 p.m. CC B continued patrolling the river line and the city of Worms without incident. CC R marched from Rockenhausen to the assembly area at Kirchheim Bolanden, arriving at 10:30 a.m., Division Artillery moved to Osthoffen at 12:30 a.m.; with the 490th Armored Field Artillery Battalion trailing to Alsheim and the 492nd Armored Field Artillery Battalion to Horcheim.

On March 25 the Division continued the assigned river defense, bridge protection, and artillery support missions ordered initially by XII Corps. CC A elements were relieved by the 3rd Infantry Division during the morning and the command concentrated on the maintenance of vehicles and rehabilitation of personnel. CC B, upon relief by the substituted 3rd Infantry Division, moved to the Framersheim area.



REACHING THE MAIN RIVER

By 7:00 p.m. word was received that the 4th Armored Division had broken through the 5th Infantry Division bridgehead and reached the Main River at Hanau and Aschaffenburg. The 6th Armored Division crossed the river during the day and made a drive toward Frankfurt. The Third Army continued its attack across the Rhine River to push to the Northeast. The XII Corps bridgehead across the Rhine was secured, and the attack was continuing to cross the Main River near Hanau. VIII Corps established a bridgehead across the Rhine River near Boppard and was driving to the East.

XX Corps Field Order No. 19, issued at 8:30 p.m. on March 26, directed an attack to establish a bridgehead between VIII and XII Corps in the vicinity of Mainz and to continue the advance to the Northeast toward Giessen. The 80th Infantry Division was named as the unit to make the assault crossing of both the Main and Rhine Rivers to establish the bridgehead.

During the afternoon the 80th Infantry Division successfully made its crossing of the Rhine near Mainz. Seventh Army's XV Corps also made crossings near Worms.

The Division completed maintenance and rehabilitation activities on March 27, and began preparations for the Rhine River crossing.

Operations Memo No. 45 was issued at 8:30 p.m. covering the protection of bridges to be built at Mainz and Gustavsburg and preparations to pass through the 65th Infantry Division on Corps order.



A couple of 41st Tankers "lighting up"

To accomplish this mission, CC B and CC A were constituted as two balanced and artillery supported combat commands. The 41st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron and 705th Tank Destroyer Battalion were teamed as a Cavalry Command for the bridge protection mission and placed directly under Division control.

On the same day the First Army armored elements broke through the Remagen bridgehead to the North and reached Giessen. VIII and XII Corps made limited progress. Stiff opposition was encountered by the 80th Infantry Division on the East bank of the Rhine opposite Mainz and they were unable to clear the bridge site even from small arms fire.

March 28 found the 80th Infantry Division slowly expanding its bridgehead across the Rhine River near Mainz. Scheduled bridging operations on both the Rhine and Mainz Rivers were delayed as stubborn resistance, including artillery and small arms fire, continued to hinder advancement. The bridge across the Rhine was started at 4:30 a.m. but little progress was made and completion time estimates were periodically pushed ahead during the day.

Meanwhile the Division received verbal instructions from XX Corps at 9:45 a.m. to have a combat command ready to start crossing the XII Corps bridge at Oppenheim at midday, thereafter to swing North to an assembly area near Bischofsheim and prepare to cross a proposed bridge over the Mainz River in that vicinity. Corps also attached the 261st Regimental Combat Team of the 65th Infantry Division to Division and cancelled the previously assigned mission of protecting Corps bridges from ground or waterborne attack.

Under the plan the balance of the Division was to cross the Mainz bridge upon its completion and to reassemble East of the Rhine and North of the Mainz Rivers, prepare to pass through leading infantry division elements, for an attack to the Northeast in the direction of Wiesbaden and Grunberg.



We never found a Nazi in all of Germany

CC A, with the 490th Armored Field Artillery Battalion attached, was directed to cross the Rhine at Oppenheim, the column started marching at 11:30 a.m. and leading elements reached the bridge at 12:15 a.m. They then

Beyond the Rhine

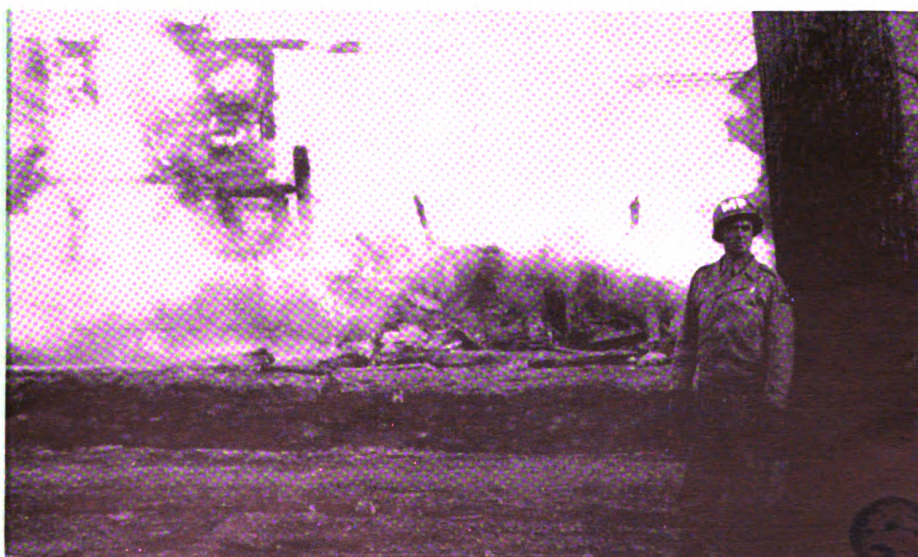


*An MP directing traffic on a Rhine River bridge
near Oppenheim*



Division columns race through Darmstadt towards Hanau.

*Division MP's keep traffic
moving through burning
village near Hanau.*



*AN M-8 of Troop A of
the 41st Cavalry
Reconnaissance Squadron
crosses the Rhine River*



Prisoners stacking German weapons.

Thru the cities and towns.





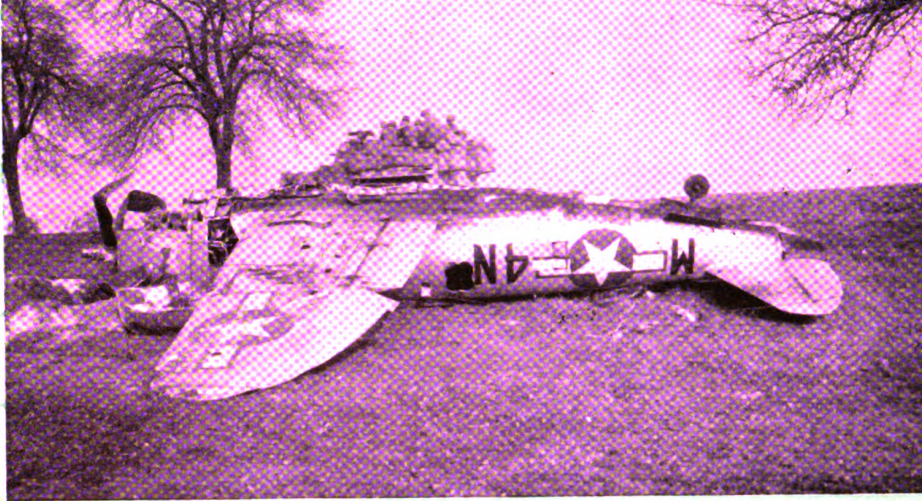
CC A coils off the road.



Brigadier General Willard A. Holbrook, Jr., CC A commander, displays a victorious grin after the successful Rhine River Crossing



Civilians looting a warehouse.



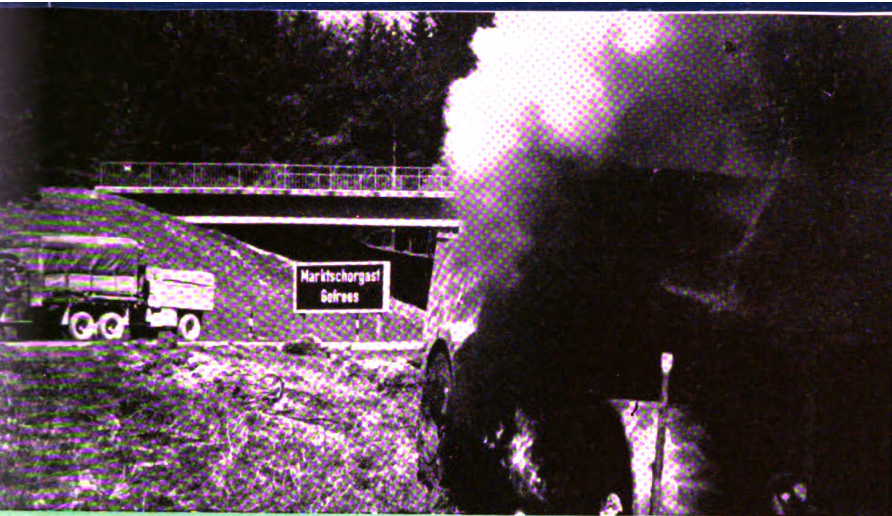
Our losses were high.



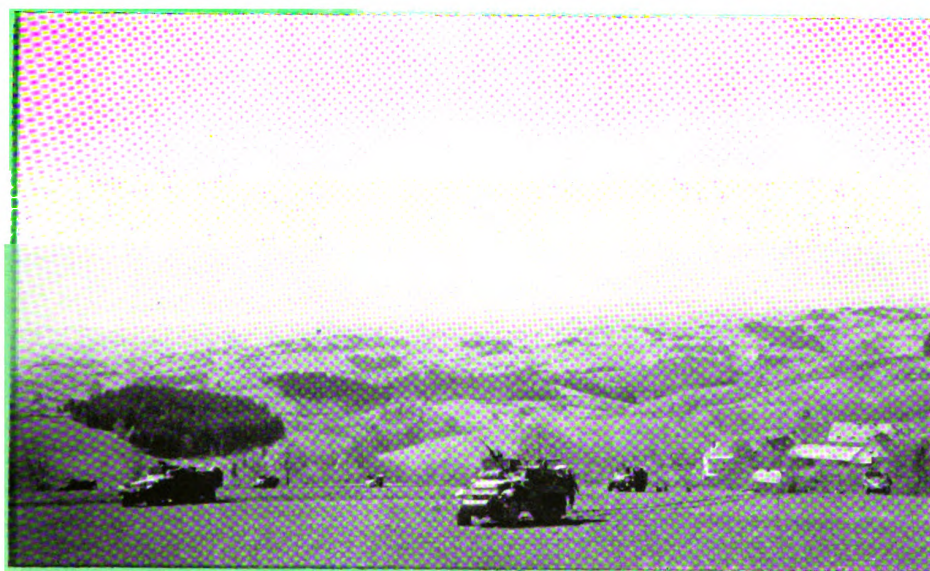
Part of the "Super Race".



These boys took lots of convincing.



We left this personnel carrier burning.



The results of good training show in this picture.

View of Grafenwobr.



Lee McArnel, Baltimore Sun war correspondent, interviews Major John Hoffman, S-3, of the 22nd Tank Battalion, at a road block on the approaches to Bayreuth, Germany. Civil-



An awe-inspiring spectacle of armored strength.



German prisoners of war watch with unbelieving eyes the mighty power of CC A armored columns rolling by near Hanau.



These Krauts stopped running long enough to pose for the photographer.



The road from Hanau with advancing columns of the 11th Armored Division



One way to overcome resistance.



Moving out of an assembly area.



A medium tank leads a column of German prisoners back



The end of the Hitler Jugend in this town.



began coiling off the road between Boschofsheim and Ginsheim to await the completion of the Main River bridge. Estimates of its completion varied widely and at 6:15 p.m. all elements closed in the Bischofsheim area. The Division was released from attachment to XX Corps and was again attached to XII Corps. The 261st Regimental Combat Team reverted to 65th Infantry Division control.

TO HANAU

At 8:45 p.m. CC A was warned to be prepared to march immediately on Hanau, as XII Corps developed plans to pass the Division through a bridgehead being established by the 26th Infantry Division over the Main River in that vicinity. Other major units were informed of existing plans and warned to be prepared to march early on March 29, following the axis of CC A. Shortly before midnight CC A was directed to march as soon as possible through Darmstadt to the vicinity of Hanau, to establish contact with the 26th Infantry Division, and to attack Northeast along the main road axis in the general direction of Fulda

The complete plan for the action in which the Division was to engage was set forth in Operational Directive No. 98, issued by XII Corps at midnight of March 28. With the 11th Armored Division and the 4th Armored Division abreast again an advance to the Northeast was laid out. The 4th, from North of the Main River on the left, was assigned the objective of Lauterbach, with the 90th Infantry Division following in support. The 11th Armored Division was to cross the Main River near Hanau and advance to the Northeast through the 26th Infantry Division bridgehead toward the main objective of an area Northwest of Fulda. The 26th Infantry Division, with the 71st Infantry Division, formerly in Corps reserve, was to clear the enemy from a zone behind the 11th Armored Division. The 2nd Cavalry Group was to move on the Right of the Thunderbolts to screen and protect the Corps flank.

The entire zone of operation assigned the Division, which was 70 kilometers long and 15 kilometers wide, contained only one first-class road running in a favorable direction. The terrain, although initially flat Rhine valley land, soon rose abruptly across a wooded hill mass, and thereafter roads and ridges crossed the zone in a series of transverse corridors. The only good corridor was up the Kinzig River valley on the South flank as far as Schluchtern and then down the Fleide River valley toward Fulda. A decision was made to attack in a single column up the only favorable corridor in the Division zone with another column prepared to branch off and operate to the North if determined resistance developed.



55th Armored Infantry Battalion advancing

Operations Memo No. 47 was issued by the Division at 1:00 a.m. on March 29, specifying a single column advance on the Hanau-Fulda axis with CC A leading. It was originally planned that CC B would follow CC A's axis, outflanking any resistance encountered by CC A. The 183rd Field Artillery Group was placed in support of CC A and Division Artillery supporting CC B.

Leaving their temporary assembly position near Bischofsheim leading elements of CC A inaugurated a blackout march to an assembly area from which to cross the Main River at the first light of morning. At 6:00 a.m. leading elements of CC A crossed the Main River at Grossauheim, passing through the 26th Infantry Division at 7:05 a.m. Task Force Ahee made the first contact at 7:15 a.m. when a roadblock in a heavily wooded area just Northeast of Hanau was encountered. The roadblock was mined and defended by infantry and panzerfaust teams but defending troops were overcome at 7:50 a.m. and the advance continued while engineers removed the roadblock.

Resistance which included anti-tank, panzerfaust, automatic weapons and small arms fire was met at Ruckingen about 8:20 a.m., so Task Force Ahee was split up into two teams which attacked the city simultaneously from the South and Southeast. House-to-house fighting developed and continued until 2:00 p.m. when the enemy was overcome at the expense of two tanks and several casualties.

Task Force Brady, which was under order to clear the Main River bridge as soon as possible so as to permit the advance of trailing units of the Division, by-passed leading elements of CC A to the North, and returned to the main axis of advance at Langenselbold where the column was halted by anti-tank, mortar and artillery fire. At 3:00 p.m. this resistance had been reduced, a damaged bridge repaired, and the city cleared and occupied.



MP's searching prisoners of war at Leidenborn. Civilian populace is shown in the background

By this time Task Force Ahee had advanced along the main axis into Langenselbold after by-passing a blown bridge. Task Force Brady, while pushing forward to Rothenbergen was again halted by enemy infantry, supported by three tanks. Temporary defensive positions were organized for the night after small-scale counterattacks had been diminished. The remainder of the command assembled near Langenselbold where the command post was established. CC B started to march across the Rhine River at 6:00 a.m., reaching the Oppenheim bridge an hour later. Slowly trailing CC A's column, which was periodically halted by enemy action, the command reached Darmstadt and Wessel at 10:45 a.m., thereafter coiling off the road near Jugesheim to await movement by CC A. Movement was resumed again about 2:00 p.m. after refueling and feeding and the command crossed the Main River at 3:00 p.m.

CC B was ordered to turn North at a road junction in the woods just West of Ruckingen and attack on a parallel axis to the Northeast as CC A was unable to make rapid progress.

The Division's remaining elements followed CC A and CC B. The Cavalry Command reached Klein Auheim at 9:00 p.m. and CC R reached Hainstadt at 9:30 p.m., thus bringing the remaining combat elements up to the West bank of the Main River ready to cross early the following day.

ASSAULT ON ROTHENBERGEN

CC A resumed its assault on Rothenbergen at 6:15 a.m. on March 30, 1945, with dismounted infantry, and encountered immediate resistance. This resistance was reduced by 8:10 a.m. after the attacking force had been reinforced by Company A, 42nd Tank Battalion. Proceeding further

against light resistance CC A seized Lieblos at 10:00 a.m. and cavalry elements of the command, on the South flank, reached Niedermittau at 10:15 a.m. When stiff opposition developed at Roth it became apparent that the enemy would defend Gelnhausen powerfully and the favorable terrain where the Kinzig River valley funneled down to a narrow canyon through the mountainous Budingerwald.

At this point an urgent request was made for more infantry and the 55th Armored Infantry Battalion was attached to CC A at 11:00 a.m. It was estimated that the Gelhausen position was held by 600 infantrymen and supported by five tanks. Artillery was sent forward and went into positions in an effort to erase the enemy fire. A plan was formulated for the combined use of the 63rd and 55th Armored Infantry Battalions so as to force the enemy by dismounted infantry. The 63rd was committed frontally by the vicinity of Roth; captured about 1:00 p.m., meanwhile dismounted elements of the 55th were sent up on high ground and through the weeds of Gelnhausen in an effort to outflank the enemy force and attack the town from dominating positions. Most of the afternoon went by while the 55th was moving into position.

Alternate Division measures were resorted to when, by midafternoon, it became apparent that CC A would not be able to crack the Gelhausen position in time to maintain any momentum behind the attack. A regiment of the 26th Infantry Division was arranged for to take over this action. The Cavalry Command was ordered through an alternate break in the mountains of Budinger Wald. CC R was directed to resume control of the 55th Armored Infantry Battalion and to block at Gelhausen while CC A disengaged and prepared to follow the cavalry.

Meanwhile CC B renewed its advance at 6:30 a.m. and seized Huttengessas at 8:45 a.m. Their progress was impeded by an extremely bad road net, and well placed booby-trap road blocks which were covered by fire. The command proceeded North through Budingen without opposition but a massive roadblock in a wooded area East of the town halted the column until 3:00 p.m. when the villages of Wolferborn and Rinderburgen were seized. Pushing forward against light resistance at 6:40 p.m. and there the command coiled for the night and the command post was established.

Cavalry Command commenced movement at 6:30 a.m., crossing the Main River and proceeding to Langenselbold where it coiled at 11:20 a.m. When CC A's advance was halted at Gelnhausen orders went out to the Cavalry Command to advance immediately on the Haingrunda-Breitenborn-Wittgenborn axis to Schlierbach in an attempt to bypass Gelnhausen and get behind the defending force. The command moved out from Nieder Grundau at 2:30



p.m., reaching Haingrundau three hours later. Resistance was nil and after a rapid advance Breitenborn was cleared at 5:30 p.m. and advance elements reached the outskirts of Schlierbach at 7:10 p.m. The command assembled in the area of Schlierbach-Wittgenborn for the night.

CC R crossed the Main River at 7:00 a.m., following CC B to Huttengessas. CC R had been ordered to assume control of the 55th Armored Infantry Battalion and then to contain the enemy force at Gelnhausen, protecting the rear and right flank of the Division until relieved later. The command moved to Mittel Grundau late in the day so as to insure control over the Gelnhausen situation.

All remaining units of the Division completed crossing of the Main River during the day. The 133rd Ordnance Maintenance Battalion was sent forward to Hanau and the 81st Medical Battalion assembled in Langenselbold. Train Headquarters command post opened at Ruckingen at 4:00 p.m.

Verbal orders for the continuation of the Division plan were received and the attack Northeast of Fulda to seize the high ground Northeast of Grossentaft was laid out.

CC B resumed the attack at 5:30 a.m. on March 31, 1945, pushing quickly from Nieder Seemen and reaching Ober Seemen at 6:30 a.m., Volkartsheim at 6:35 a.m. and Nieder Moos at 7:30 a.m. Although slight enemy resistance was encountered at Reichlos the village was cleared by 8:00 a.m. The advance guard lost one vehicle near Hauswerz when two enemy tanks were encountered and a fire fight ensued. Supporting XIX Tactical Air Command Fighter bombers severely damaged Bauswerz and Ober Moos and left the towns blazing. CC B advanced rapidly following the air strike, reaching Geisel at 11:50 a.m. and dominating



Sabine River practice came in handy here

terrain West of Fulda at 1:15 p.m. While patrols were feeling out resistance in the city of Fulda in preparation for an attack orders were delivered covering the continuation of the attack to the Northeast. Turning North the command proceeded to Grossenluder, arriving at 5:30 p.m. The post was established there at 7:00 p.m.

CC A's cavalry moved out at 5:30 a.m. following the route opened the previous day by the Cavalry Command. A brief delay North of Wittgenborn occurred two hours later from road blocks and small arms fire. The block was cleared and the resistance neutralized by 8:20 a.m. allowing the column to proceed. Anti-tank, mortar, automatic weapons and small arms fire was encountered at Hellstein at 10:15 a.m. after the column had passed through Soielberg and Streitburg without hindrance. The town was cleared in an hour and the advance resumed through Udenhain.

A further enemy strong point was liquidated near Katholischwillenroth at 12:30 a.m. and the advance renewed through Eckardaroth, Romsthal, Kebersdorf and Sarrod. Resistance met at Ulmbach at 2:00 p.m. was reduced in 45 minutes. Between Kressenbach and Breitenbach an enemy tank and self-propelled gun were destroyed. In the towns of Wallroth and Muldorf the command was slowed by enemy tanks, anti-tank, mortar and small arms fire. Numerous enemy infantry made direct support artillery fire imperative, followed by house-to-house dismounted action. Both towns were cleared by 4:00 p.m. CC A destroyed a total of six enemy tanks and eight miscellaneous vehicles during the day and captured a total of 80 enemy prisoners of war. Its total losses included one M-4 tank and one halftrack.

CC R held enemy forces in Gelnhausen until 11:00 a.m. when they were relieved by the 104th Infantry Regiment, 26th Infantry Division. At midday the command resumed the march, following CC A and assembling for the night at Reichlos. CC R, following CC A and blocking the Southeast flank, moved to Marborn.

Early in the evening orders were brought in from XII Corps involving a complete change of plans for the following day. An advance via Meiningen over the Thuringia Wald was ordered to seize the communications centers of Armstadt and Kranichfeld. This was part of the Corps effort to seize the High German Command and the key German political figures.

Quickly summarizing the damage inflicted on the enemy during the month of March we find the comparative figures paid in men and materiel startling and revealing.



COMPARATIVE CASUALTIES

Enemy killed and wounded amounted to 2,572, plus 21,001 prisoners of war, totalling 23,573 casualties. Our own total battle casualties were 655—164 of which were killed in action, 488 wounded, and three missing. The enemy figure for prisoners represents the number processed through Division PW Cages. A total of at least 23,537 prisoners were actually captured, however, 2,537 of these were turned over to the following infantry units for processing and evacuation.

Total casualties for vehicles and weapons presented an even more startling comparison. Enemy casualties amounted to 14,977 against our own 85. In addition to mentioned destroyed enemy materiel the fast-moving columns of the Division further crippled Germany's capacity to continue the war by destroying warehouses stocking Wehrmacht food, enemy ordnance factories, enemy hospitals and numerous miscellaneous plans operating in support of the German Army.

During the month approximately 1,000 reinforcements kept the Division's strength up to 620 officers and 10,206 enlisted men. Critical materiel, constantly replaced, kept the Division strength high. Division Artillery fired approximately 16,000 rounds of ammunition in 675 separate missions, inflicting extensive damage on the enemy.

The Division had made a 300-kilometer advance in direct ground contact with the enemy. A total of over 450 kilometers of movement during the month, or an average of 15 kilometers per day, illustrated the long-term mobility capabilities of an armored division.

ADVANCE TOWARD ARNSTADT

According to the plan received from XII Corps on March 31, certain communication centers in the area were selected as objectives. The 4th Armored Division was to attack Northeast and then Southeast along an autobahn, around the North end of the Thuringia Wald to seize Gotha and Ohrdruf. The 11th Armored Division, abreast of the 4th Armored Division and on the South flank, was directed to advance by the most direct routes to the Northeast via Meiningen over the wooded Thuringia Wald hill mass, by-passing all resistance, to seize Arnstadt and Kranichfeld. The Thunderbolts were once again confronted with an operation zone offering but a limited secondary road net, perpendicular corridors, and both the Werra River and a mountain range to cross. The city of Fulda and wooded hill area Northwest and North of it were still being strongly held by the enemy, therefore, it was found advisable to bottleneck the entire division through the one open road in the 90th Infantry Division zone to the Northwest as far as Schiltz.

CC B, the first major unit to be affected, situated on the North, was ordered to advance along an axis East from

Schiltz, by-pass Meiningen on the North, and seize Arnstadt. Division Artillery was directed to support CC B, and CC R following along the Northern axis. CC A, following CC R until reaching the vicinity of Hilders, was ordered to advance on a parallel Southern axis and seize Kranichfeld. The 183rd Field Artillery Group was directed to support CC A, and Cavalry Command to follow along the Southern open-flank axis. All division troops were directed to proceed along the CC B axis.

CC A, commencing movement at 9:15 a.m. on April 1, followed CC R along the single axis of advance until Ober Nust was reached late in the afternoon. CC A trains were attacked near Wallroth at 12:35 a.m. but the enemy was driven off with no casualties inflicted to the command. Task Force Ahee's advance was harassed between Mackenzell and Gotthards by mortar and small arms fire from high wooded hills adjacent to the route of advance. Branching South at Ober Nust the first contact was made and the enemy quickly overcome at Mahlerts. At 5:00 p.m. Hilders had been seized and Frankenheim and Reichenhausen fell after scattered light resistance.

During the day Division Artillery and the 183rd Field Artillery Group supported CC B and CC A, respectively. CC R and Cavalry Command, advancing behind CC B and CC A, respectively, were occupied with clearing towns and woods along the routes of advance throughout the day. CC R gathered an approximate 400 prisoners of war and turned them over to the 90th Infantry Division at Schiltz. CC B resumed the advance at 6:30 a.m., marching North as far as Schiltz. Turning East, scattered enemy groups situated in towns and wooded hills along the route slowed the column with stubborn action. Mackenzell was reached at 8:45 a.m., thereafter pushing rapidly forward to Ober Nust which was reached at 10:50 a.m.



48 miles to Fulda

The first contact was made with the enemy defending Lahrbach shortly after 11:00 a.m. Fighter-bombers of the

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ARMY GROUP G

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XIX Tactical Air Command softened the attack on Lahrbach, leaving it in flames. CC B then commenced the advance through the town. One hundred enemy soldiers were estimated killed in the action. Others, totalling 259, dazed by the combined armored-air attack, surrendered hopelessly. Several general purpose vehicles and 20 to 25 horse-drawn artillery pieces were knocked out in this action. The command then proceeded further along the sniper infested route and at Hundsbach anti-tank, mortar, and small arms fire was encountered. The town was completely destroyed after air, artillery, and tank fire eliminated all resistance. As Kaltenwestheim was neared a little after mid-day, heavy artillery and mortar fire was poured from the surrounding hills onto the advancing CC B. Here all units were halted for re-supply of fuel and ammunition while the artillery went into position and destroyed or dispersed the enemy.



Mines take their toll in the 21st Infantry

The advance continued as far as Kaltensundheim where CC B established a command post and temporary defensive positions were organized for the night. During the day CC B had advanced 35 miles and taken about 1,000 prisoners of war.

During the last day of March and April 1, the Division had outdistanced its supporting infantry by over 60 kilometers. Meanwhile, far to the West near Gelnhausen, by-passed enemy groups had returned to ambush positions from secluded wooded areas and were greatly harassing and threatening the Corps rear. As a result, a TWX received from XII Corps ordered the Division to restrain its operations West of a North-South line through Meiningen.

On April 2, after the experience of the previous day, a number of precautionary measures were taken and orders issued. To increase the Division's flank protection Troop C, 41st Cavalry, was attached to CC B and the remainder of Cavalry Command was placed under direct control of CC A.

Division Artillery was directed to maintain air patrols on the South flank between Fulda and Ostheim and on the North between Schmalkalden and Geisa for early warning of any attempted flank attack. Company D, 22nd Tank Battalion, was placed under Division control to escort Division trains on their long haul from supply installations through by-passed enemy pockets to the forward combat elements.

ACROSS THE WERRA RIVER

CC B, jumping off at 7:00 a.m. on April 2, advanced rapidly, reaching Aschenhausen, Ober Katz and Unterkats by 8:00 a.m. Leading elements of the command seized Mehmeis at 9:25 a.m. Advanced elements found a bridge blown over the Werra River at Wasungen. A Division order was received directing CC B to establish a bridgehead and repair the crossing of the Werra River. Work on the pontoon bridge was initiated at 11:30 a.m., after elements of the 21st Armored Infantry Battalion forded the river to establish a small bridgehead. At 5:45 p.m. the bridge was completed and the remainder of the 21st Armored Infantry Battalion, plus an attached medium tank company, crossed the river at 8:00 p.m. thus deepening the bridgehead and setting the stage for resuming the attack.

Resuming the attack at 7:00 a.m., CC A gained 21 kilometers against light enemy resistance during the day. The command followed the Schafhausen-Gerthausen-Wohl-Muthausen - Bettlenhausen - Hazelbach-Hennergerg-Bauerbach-Ritschenhausen axis. One German Mark V and one Mark III were engaged and destroyed near Bettenhausen.

CC A's mission of securing the heights West of the Werra River near Grimmenthal was changed at 9:30 a.m. to seizing all available bridges across the Werra near Ritschenhausen and establishing a bridgehead for further use. Although under fire, Task Force Ahee seized intact three bridges across the Werra and tributary rivers near Grimmenthal and a small bridgehead established by 11:15 a.m. Untermassfeld was seized and secured by 1:30 p.m. Both Untermassfeld and Obermassfeld were held under heavy nebelwerfer fire throughout the afternoon. From a Grimmenthal camp CC A liberated 400 Allied prisoners of war, most of whom were crippled. In preparation for the following day's action a reinforced infantry company was sent East to Vachdorf late in the afternoon to seize and hold a bridge over the Werra. This mission was accomplished at 8:15 p.m.

CC R moved to the vicinity of Unterweid at 9:15 a.m. and placed the 22nd Tank Battalion in positions covering the Division rear. The day was mainly devoted to clearing previously by-passed towns and handling prisoners along the CC B route of advance.



During the day the 4th Armored Division to the North, reached the Werra River also to find all bridges blown by the retreating enemy.

CC B continued the advance at 7:00 a.m. on April 3, pushing rapidly forward through Metzels, Christes and Breitenbach. The few remaining, disorganized defenders were quickly overrun and the command advanced through Springstille, reaching Steinbach-Hallenberg at 11:10 a.m.

As the command climbed to Ober Schonau heavier resistance in the form of Panzerfaust and small arms fire developed. The town was cleared and the advance continued at 11:30 a.m. The route of advance from Ober Schonau to Oberhof was along a winding mountain road climbing steeply through a heavily wooded gorge. Two massive road blocks which were heavily defended by panzerfaust teams and small arms took the entire afternoon to liquidate. Dismounted elements of the 21st Armored Infantry Battalion advanced on Oberhof through a driving snow storm to seize this road center on the crest of the Thuringia Wald. The 41st Tank Battalion followed and the city was cleared of snipers by 11:00 p.m. Artillery elements of the command remained in place between Ober Schonau and Oberhof during the night. The command's cavalry elements, in the meantime operating on the North flank overcame light resistance to seize the large town of Schmalkalden during the afternoon.

ADVANCE LIGHTLY CONTESTED

CC A's cavalry moved out at 6:00 a.m., followed by the main body at 7:00 a.m. The advance was lightly contested but by 9:20 a.m. the towns of Oberstadt, Marisfels, and Suhler Neundorf were all cleared of the enemy. As the advanced elements emerged from the woods one and a half kilometers from Suhl considerable resistance was encountered. Divided into three columns for a coordinated attack on the city, progress was slowed by anti-tank, artillery, panzerfaust, automatic weapon and small arms fire. Upon seizing dominating heights overlooking the city, it was subjected to heavy concentrations of tank and massed artillery fire.

The defending enemy force which was made up of an estimated 600 Volksturm, augmented by a few regular Wehrmacht personnel, strongly contested progress from behind roadblocks and in buildings. Into the Southwestern position of the city moved infantry elements and tanks and the defenders were cleared out in bitter street and house-to-house fighting which continued long after dark. Several supporting missions were flown by the XIX Tactical Air Command on this day of April 3. The main air strike of the day occurred in the afternoon when a retreating column of approximately 200 enemy vehicles were strafed along the highway and at least 40 destroyed.

Following CC B's axis of advance, CC R left Unterweid at 10:00 a.m. and marched to Ober Katz. As the progress of CC B allowed another abound to be made, the command was ordered to clear towns forward to Steinbach-Hallenberg during the early afternoon. While clearing the area elements of the 22nd Tank Battalion engaged and destroyed one German Tiger tank one kilometer Southeast of Stepperhausen.

Preceding CC R, the Division command post followed CC B's route to Steinbach-Hallenberg, after a temporary stop at Metzels. Division troops and trains followed closely behind CC R. The 133rd Ordnance Maintenance Battalion moved to Metzels and the 81st Armored Medical Battalion moved to Herges Heleinberg as trailing elements closed into an area where protection could be afforded by CC R.



Burning out the snipers

The Division's advance to the crest of the Thuringia Wald during the day placed it further East than any other United States Army unit in Germany. Until the following day it was not apparent that the location of the bulk of the Division in the heart of Naziland actually surrounded a German Army small arms manufacturing center until factory after factory was uncovered the following day.

During the day the 4th Armored Division crossed bridges constructed over the Werra River to the North and made further advances along the autobahn toward their final objective. CC A advance elements reached Hastrungsfeld and CC B a point five kilometers Northwest of Gotha.

Operational Directive No. 101 was received from Headquarters XII Corps at 5:30 a.m. on April 4, 1945, designating the limit of Corps Eastern advance as a Gotha-Suhl line. The 4th Armored Division on the North, was directed to seize and hold Gotha and Ohrdruf. The 26th Infantry Division assignment was a separate zone between the 4th and 11th Armored Divisions for clearance. The Thunderbolts were ordered to hold Suhl and Oberhof,



and thereafter to patrol to the East as far as a line from Grafenroda to Gehren. The Division was also ordered to clear the enemy from its zone West of the Oberhof-Suhl line and protect Corps right flank East of Fulda. The Division therefore was stopped short of its original objective and found its offensive mission had been substantially completed.

The Division still undertook, on its own initiative, the task of securing the crest of Thuringia Wald on the South flank. CC A was ordered to seize Stutzerbach while CC B's mission was the securement of Oberhof. CC R was directed to clear the zone between CC A and CC B, including the arms manufacturing center of Sella-Mehlis. Division Artillery continued to flank air patrols and support major unit operations along with the 183rd Field Artillery Groups. The 56th Armored Engineer Battalion was to secure the Wasungen and Grimenthal bridges over the Werra River. Just before renewing the offensive operations originally planned for the day, CC B was held up and the task of clearing enemy from its zone was undertaken. During the day the enemy rained Oberhof with sporadic artillery, mortar, and nebelwerfer fire. Patrols scouting on the North and East made close contacts with the enemy.



Refueling with wine

CC A planned its own operation, this being to open a direct lateral route to the bulk of the Division. This plan was approved at Division Headquarters with the exception that the forces were not to proceed further North of Benhausen where contact with elements of CC R was directed. CC A continued its clearance of Suhl while cavalry and tank destroyer elements patrolled the Division South flank. The majority of resistance was met on the outskirts of the town where small arms fire was met in considerable volume. Volksturm sniping troops, in civilian clothes and with no distinguishing armbands, delayed the action to some extent.

After repeated reports of this type of resistance had been received orders were issued to burn the town, but

these orders were reclassified after the commanding general of CC A flew to the Division command post and explained that such an order could not be executed. The area was reported cleared at 6:55 p.m. An estimated 5,000 mixed nationality slave workers who manned arms factories in the town, pilfered and looted, destroying considerable property after they had been liberated.

CC R mopped up in the Steinbach-Hallenberg area during the morning. A two-column advance on Zella-Mehlis was initiated at 2:00 p.m. Roadblocks, found undefended, felled trees, and debris-littered roads delayed the advance. The command was greeted by white flags when it entered Zella-Mehlis at 4:00 p.m. Contact was later established with elements of CC A at Benshausen and Suhl but an attempt to make contact with CC B along a road to Oberhof was unsuccessful.

The 56th Armored Engineer Battalion and supporting units established and maintained company guards at the important bridges over the Werra River at Wasungen and Grimenthal.

The 4th Armored Division to the North, captured Gotha at noon and passed to control of the VIII Corps.

MUNITIONS PRIZE

With the capture of Suhl, Zella-Mehlis, and several surrounding smaller Thuringia towns, one of the largest munitions industry prizes of the war fell to the Thunderbolts. Included among them was the famed Walther Arms Works. A capitulation of the arms, armament parts, and materiel seized in the area included: Pistols, P38—1,600; 7.65mm—4,600; Signal—598; 22 cal.—325. Sniper rifles and scopes complete—2,210; scopes incomplete—4,420; rifles partly assembled—1,140; 113 lathes, 97 milling machines, 41 drill presses, nine punch presses, two hydraulic presses, and 40 grinders. At least 500 new type enemy carbines and 2,500 Burp guns with sufficient parts for an additional 5,000 were uncovered at Suhl. Over a million rounds of small arms ammunition were included. This material was found in several large plants and over 50 small decentralized plants. In addition to weapons, several of these factories produced parts of robot aircraft.

CC R renewed its effort to establish lateral contact with CC B during the early morning of April 5. A small task force was successful in breaking through to Oberhof after reducing three roadblocks. The bulk of the command which had been organized into two forces, moved toward Meiningen from Zella Mehliis at 11:30 a.m. The 22nd Tank Battalion with an additional infantry company moved along the Rohr-Meiningen axis and on reaching the airport was encountered by dug-in panzerfaust crews and infantry. After a bitter fight the airport was seized at 3:00 p.m. and the battalion advanced to the East edge of Meiningen against small fire arms.



ALLIED PRISONERS LIBERATED

The 55th Armored Infantry Battalion, plus a medium tank company, meanwhile moved on the axis Kuhndorf-Helba to Meiningen. Three road blocks, defended with small arms fire, automatic weapons, and panzerfaust, delayed the action. In the absence of artillery, Meiningen was attacked by fighter bombers of the XIX Tactical Air Command to soften evidently determined resistance. Immediately after the air strike both task forces fought their way into Meiningen. Once in the city a hospital containing 470 Allied prisoners of war was liberated and seven German hospitals with 1,600 patients were captured. The city was cleared by 7:00 p.m. and 600 prisoners of war were taken, including students at the Wehrmacht Non-Commissioned Officer and Officer Candidate Schools. A guard was placed on a camp containing some 500 political prisoners in Unter Massfeld. Later in the afternoon a FW 190 landed at the airport in error and the pilot surrendered with disgust. CC R troops were relieved shortly after 7:00 p.m. when a battalion of the 26th Infantry Division, 101st Infantry Regiment reached the town from the West.

While clearing and occupying additional small towns in the zone CC R killed an estimated 100 enemy troops and captured 2,200 prisoners during the day. Destroyed enemy materiel included six halftracks, two 75mm anti-tank guns, two 20mm guns and three general purpose vehicles. The Command's losses included one killed, 13 wounded, and two medium tanks destroyed.



This mine will never cause any damage

CC A renewed attempts to capture Schmiedefeld and Stutz-erbach at 7:00 a.m., April 5. Quick advance was made until the head of the valley near Goldlauter was reached and there enemy resistance stiffened and two defended roadblocks on dominating wooded terrain delayed progress. The enemy withdrew when dismounted infantry outflanked the position. Progress was further halted Northwest of Schmiedefeld with strong opposition from the high ground.

Further dismounted action was taken but automatic weapon and nebelwerfer fire was so heavy only limited progress could be made and at night fall the bulk of the force withdrew to Suhl.



1st/Sgt. George A. Band, of Phoenix, Ariz., examines new type Nazi rifle intended for use by Volksturm Troopers, but never issued, due to capture of Waltham Arms Plant in Zella-Mehlis.

Before daylight enemy activity East of Oberhof indicated the enemy may be preparing for a counter attack but no action developed. Division Artillery fired several neutralizing missions to eliminate sporadic enemy mortar and artillery fire that fell on Oberhof during the day.

The Division command post moved out of Steinbach Hallenberg to Zella Mehli during the day, opening about 10:30 a.m.

At 6:10 p.m., XII Corps advised the Division to expect a change in plans and relief of some units by the 26th Infantry Division. Corps also indicated another impending advance, probably in a southerly direction, therefore CC B and CC A were directed to cease offensive action and warned to expect new orders.

While awaiting the new orders the Division spent the morning of April 6 in regrouping and maintenance work. Advance parties of the 26th and 90th Infantry Division made relief arrangements with major units.

The principal obstacles to the Division's 80-kilometer advance East from Fulda were constituted of defended towns, blown bridges, and well-placed roadblocks. The 4,500 prisoners of war taken during the first five days of April came mainly from replacement battalions, training battalions, anti-aircraft units, hastily assembled school troops Volkstrum and belligerent civilians added to the list.

Nearly 1,000 Allied prisoners were liberated in the Division's drive, and several thousand political prisoners and Allied nationality slave workers set free from their Nazi Taskmasters. The continued looting, rioting, and general



disorder of these liberated groups became such a problem that combat elements had to step in in an attempt to eliminate it.

Field Order No. 18 from XII Corps Headquarters was received at 1:25 p.m. This outlined plans for a continuation of the advance to the East and Southeast, while VIII



Part of the cache at Zella Meblis and Subl

Corps on the North maintained a limited advance directly East. XII Corps planned to turn to the Southeast and attack through the Thuringia Wald as far as the Czechoslovakian border, with the 26th and 90th Divisions abreast. The 71st Infantry Division on the South flank was ordered to protect the Corps South flank West of Meiningen and was assigned to clear a zone in the rear of the 11th Armored Division attack to the Southeast.

When relieved by the 26th Infantry Division, the 11th Division was directed to seize an assembly area along a line Schleusingen-Hildburghausen, not later than April 8, and then prepare to advance toward Bayreuth.

The remainder of the day was spent in preparing the advance of the following day. The 26th Infantry Division meanwhile, completed the relief of CC A and CC R and assumed responsibility for the Southern portion of the former Division zone. Elements of the 90th Infantry Division relieved CC B at Oberhof. The command of CC B was taken over about mid-afternoon by Colonel Wesley W. Yale.

ATTACK ANTICIPATED

During the afternoon an enemy field order was seized. It indicated that the German 413th Infantry Division was about to counterattack on the Division South flank in the vicinity to retake Meiningen and cut the Division's main supply route. As such an attack would endanger the Grimenthal bridge, elements of CC R were sent immediately to the scene. The counterattack did not materialize in force but a roadblock defended with anti-tank guns

near Ritschenhausen cost CC R Infantry elements one 105mm SP gun. CC R withdrew its force and augmented engineer defensive positions around the bridge site. Radio relay stations were established to warn the Division lest any threat should develop from the Bauerbach area.

At 7:00 a.m. on April 7, the Division initiated movement to seize an assembly area in the Themar section. CC A, CC R, and Cavalry Command moved out on separate routes. Organized in three balanced task forces, CC A advanced on Schleusingen, Hildburghausen, and Themar, respectively. Task Force Sheely, on the route to Hildburghausen, encountered anti-tank, artillery and roadblocks. Task Force Ahee, on the right, had reduced a roadblock and was attacking Themar; Task Force Shilly, on the left, was attacking Schleusingen; and Task Force Brady in the center was within seven kilometers of Hildburghausen. All forces were meeting increased resistance. The opposition in Themar and Schleusingen consisted primarily of small arms, anti-tank, and panzerfaust fire from enemy infantry dug in cellars and houses. At 2:30 p.m. Task Force Brady was delayed by a blown bridge and roadblock at Ebenhards but the block was reduced and they had the town cleared at 4:00 p.m.

Fighter bomber support was used in clearing the route into Hildburghausen and to soften the city itself. Task Force Brady continued into Hildburghausen against light opposition and reported the center of the city cleared at 8:55 p.m. Schleusingen was cleared by 4:30 p.m. after Task Force Shelly had been forced to house-to-house fighting against stubborn resistance.



There was resistance at Schlesingen

Task Force Ahee, after losing five tanks to anti-tank fire in an unsuccessful attack on Themar, employed artillery and dismounted infantry in a house-to-house mopping up of the city.

After CC R had reached its objective in mid-afternoon, the Division ordered Company B, 55th Armored Infantry



Battalion, to assist in the mop-up of Themar. The task was completed at 8:00 p.m. and Company B released to CC R. The 183rd Field Artillery Group followed and supported CC A. During the day CC A seized and cleared eight towns; capturing more than 450 prisoners of war.

CC R encountered only light resistance. The towns of Vachdorf, Leutersdorf, and Henfstadt were occupied by 11:00 a.m. thus completing the command's mission. Reports of a large enemy build-up to the East in the vicinity of Schmiedefeld for a counter-attack on Suhl were relayed to CC R with directions to maintain contact with elements of the 26th Infantry Division and to stop any such threat should it actually develop. Late in the day the command received enemy fire from the woods North of Ritschenhausen, presumably from elements of the German 413th Infantry Division. The fire was returned and an enemy halftrack and ammunition dump destroyed.

According to plan, Cavalry Command moved out at 7:00 a.m., picking up Troop C at Marisfeld enroute. The command seized its objective, Juchsen, by 1:50 p.m., meeting only light resistance. Exdorf was cleared at 5:00 p.m. Occasional enemy artillery fire harassed the troops until 8:00 p.m. Thirty-nine prisoners were taken during the day. Advance reconnaissance and artillery elements of CC B moved from their assembly area near Oberhof at 11:30 a.m., reaching Bischofred some two hours later. At 1:00 p.m. the main body followed through Zella Mehlis and Suhl, with



The artillery fights on foot

artillery in the lead, anticipating action to recross the Werra River. Previous plans to proceed through Themar were changed due to the resistance encountered there by CC A. Placing Division Artillery in position near Bischofred the column continued West and crossed the Werra River at Henfstadt unopposed. Continuing Southeast down a ridge, the command reached Beinerstadt at 5:45 p.m. and advance elements held up at Bernhards for the night.



Entering Leimreith

Clearing the newly taken assembly area, establishing internal and lateral contacts, and preparing for future operations were the principal activities for April 8, 1945.

CC A continued to clear Hildburghausen during the morning. Around midday the command was ordered to make lateral contacts with the 26th Infantry Division. A task force, moving out at 6:20 p.m. established contact with the 101st Infantry Regiment, 26th Infantry Division, about 7:35 p.m.

PFERSDORTH

CC B resumed the advance at 7:00 a.m., reaching Pfersdorth and Zeildfeld without opposition. By midday all elements of the command had closed in the Dingsleben-Pfersdorth-Zeildfeld area. A half hour later the Division ordered CC B to establish contact with CC A and to seize and occupy Bedheim and Leimrieth.

Against light resistance Leimrieth was seized at 3:05 p.m., Bedheim at 4:30 p.m. and Roth in addition at 4:55 p.m. Throughout the night the 41st Cavalry received sporadic artillery and nebelwerfer fire from the Southwest flank.

Reports from Intelligence continued to point to a concentration of 2,000 SS troops, reinforced by 80 tanks, situated in the area of Schmiedefeld, preparing to recapture Suhl. Division Artillery and seven squadrons of Division controlled fighter bombers were concentrated on this area throughout the day and fires continued into the night. Although exact results of this shelling and bombing were unknown, the enemy failed to attack.

XII Corps was notified at 6:30 p.m. that the Division had seized and occupied its assembly area as ordered.

April 9 was devoted mainly to rehabilitation of personnel and maintenance of vehicles, as well as maintaining patrol contacts with the Division area.



The 63rd Armored Infantry knocked out this German Personnel Carrier

Operations Memo. No. 52 was issued at 10:00 a.m., outlining the Division plan for the continuation of advance as far Southeast as Bayreuth. The zone, 80-kilometers long and 20-kilometers wide, was subdivided between CC B and CC A. The terrain in the zone was rolling, with dominating heights to the East and several cross-cutting river valleys, but containing a more favorable road net. Coburg and Bayreuth were included among the several large cities to be dealt with.

CC A was assigned the task of seizing Neustadt, Kronach, Kulmbach; assisting CC B in seizing Bayreuth; and maintaining lateral contact with the 26th Infantry Division. CC B was to seize Coburg, Marktzeuln, assisting CC A with taking Kulmbach and Bayreuth, also to establish lateral contact with CC A on such successive objectives. The 183rd Field Artillery Groups continued to support CC A and Division Artillery supporting CC B. The 705th Tank Destroyer Battalion was to provide security for Division Troops while the 41st Cavalry protected the Southwest flank.

The 71st Infantry Division accomplished its mission of clearing the areas by-passed by the Division and major units were advised at 3:00 p.m. that they were to pass through the 11th Armored Division and attack to the Southeast on April 10 or 11, 1945.

During the afternoon Seventh Army's 14th Armored and 45th Infantry Divisions advance elements came up abreast of the Division on the Third Army South flank.

THE APPROACH TO COBURG

Through a heavy ground haze the Division resumed offensive operations at 6:15 a.m. on April 10, the objective being to seize the city of Coburg and the vicinity. The general plan contemplated that CC A would semi-isolate the city by seizing and blocking all the North and East approaches to Coburg, while CC B attacked the city itself from advantageous terrain to the Northwest and West.

The enemy pattern of resistance during the following several days was built around a continuous defense and withdrawal from delaying obstacles. Large fighting units went unidentified. The basic German hastily organized unit consisted of Kamp Gruppe and miscellaneous battalions, built around an SS cadre, and filled out with any and all available manpower. Prisoners were taken from the 17th SS Panzer Grenadier Training and Replacement Battalion and 17 other miscellaneous units. River lines, wooded or terrain defiles, and particularly road center towns on favorable defensive terrain, were strongly defended from behind heavy log roadblocks.

CC A's advance cavalry elements moved out at 6:15 a.m., on April 10, followed an hour later by Task Force Brady, reaching Ahlstadt by 7:30 a.m. The advance resumed and Ottowind was occupied at 8:35 a.m. and Moggenhrunn a half hour later. A defended road block near Oberlauter caused the first contact to be made, this being cleared around 10:00 a.m., but the advance halted when forward Troop A, 41st Cavalry elements, found Oberlauter defended. Task Force Brady, advancing through artillery and small arms fire, attacked and captured the towns, blocking the main North route out of Coburg. A blown bridge at Wohlbach was by-passed after Task Force Ahee overran dug-in enemy infantry, seizing the towns to cut a second main road into Coburg.

While engineers completed a treadway bridge at Wohlbach Troop A, 41st Cavalry, reinforced with Tank and Tank Destroyer elements, advanced to Monchroden and by 3:50 p.m. cut the main road from Neustadt to Coburg, completing Coburg's isolation from the North and East. Task Force Ahee seized Unterlauter at 6:00 p.m. after it had been softened by a squadron air strike. The 183rd Field Artillery Group, supporting CC A, fired 25 missions, expending 719 rounds and destroying at least two enemy general purpose vehicles. The command organized defensive positions and established roadblocks on all critical



Digging the snipers out of ruins



roads before assembling in the area of Wohlsbach-Oberlauter-Unterauder for the night. An advance of 30 kilometers had been made during the day and the planned mission accomplished.

Resuming advance at 7:00 a.m. on April 10, CC B made first contact with the enemy, armed with panzerfaust and small fire arms, in the area of Steinfeld-Eishausen. Abetted by tactical air and artillery these towns were entered and cleared by 8:45 a.m. Passing through the blazing wreckage to the South, the advance guard reached the outskirts of Rodach by 9:00 a.m. The 21st Armored Infantry Battalion attacked and the defenders, including infantry and panzerfaust teams, were overrun or killed, and captured by 12:30 a.m. The advance continued beyond the blazing Rodach and the towns of Schweighof, Neida and Wiesfeld were taken by 2:05 p.m., against light resistance. The command consolidated their positions near Weisenfeld on Division order, developing the situation through aggressive patrolling around Coburg for the remainder of the day.

At 4:00 p.m. CC R was directed to march on Hildburghausen, clearing a lateral route across to CC B's axis of advance and clearing the Eishausen-Rodach area for occupation by the 410th Field Artillery Group and Division troops. At 10:45 a.m. CC R reduced a roadblock, thus opening the road from Hildburghausen to Rodach. At this



We overran this Bridge before it could be blown

point the command was divided, the 22nd Tank Battalion took an Eastern crosscountry route and the 55th Armored Infantry Battalion swung around to the West to clear the area. Seven towns were cleared, Rodach occupied, and patrol contacts made with CC B and the 41st Cavalry before sundown.

The 41st Cavalry, falling behind CC A at Hildburghausen, continued to the East on the main road to clear Schackendorf at 11:00 a.m. and block along the Division's

Northeast flank. The bulk of the Squadron followed CC A to Ahstadt where the patrols were sent to the North and Northeast as far as Harras and Rottenbach meeting no resistance.

The 410th Field Artillery Group, following CC R, moved forward to positions Southeast of Rodach during the afternoon. On order from the Division a coordinated heavy artillery fire was laid on Coburg throughout the night.

The Division was aided during the day by particularly effective tactical air support as squadron fighter-bomber missions targeted Eishausen, Unterauder, Meustadt, Rodach, and Coburg. Several missions were diverted to destroy enemy aircraft active in the area.

Preceded by the 705th Tank Destroyer Battalion and followed by the 56th Armored Engineer Battalion, Division Headquarters moved to Rodach between 4:00 p.m. and 4:30 p.m. Over 350 prisoners of war were evacuated through the Division cage.

CIVILIANS EVACUATED

CC A's headquarters were visited at 9:00 p.m. on April 10, by emissaries of the Duke of Coburg who requested evacuation of 300 women and children refugees said to be residents of Coburg Castle. The Division granted permission for the evacuation to be made on the morning of April 11.

A reconnaissance made by CC B late in the afternoon indicated that Coburg would be strongly defended. A report was made to XII Corps pointing out that in such a large city the commitment of the entire Division infantry elements would make such a deliberate mop-up action a long drawnout process. In reply XII Corps advised that a Regimental Combat Team of the 71st Infantry Division had been given the task of seizing Coburg on April 11.

Continuous harassing artillery fire focused on Coburg during the night and an early morning dive-bomber and strafing attack added to the softening process of the city.

While the authorized evacuation of civilians was being executed in the early morning of April 11, final preparations were made by CC B and Combat Team Five, 71st Infantry Division for an assault on the city.

Emissaries from Coburg returned to CC A's 42nd Tank Battalion command post at 9:00 a.m. seeking surrender terms for the Castle, under control of the Duke of Coburg, and the city, controlled by the Wehrmacht. The enemy was given until 10:30 a.m. to capitulate, while air and artillery fire was suspended and a staff party from Headquarters CC A sent into the city to negotiate surrender.



SURRENDER OF COBURG

A flight of fighter-bombers from XIX Tactical Air Command arrived at Coburg at 10:00 a.m., circling continuously over the city, ready to strike in the event of refusal to surrender. At 10:30 a.m. both the Castle and the city surrendered to the Thunderbolts, and, under terms imposed in the capitulation, the civilians commenced to clear the streets of roadblocks and other obstacles.

CC B's Counter Intelligence Corps, Military Government, and IPW personnel immediately entered Coburg and engineer parties were sent forward to clear the streets of mines and determine roads into, through, and out of the city.

CC A continued to block all roads North and East of Coburg during the morning. Several small towns South of Wohlsbach were cleared by 11:15 a.m.

A verbal order issued to major units at 1:00 p.m. on April 11, outlined the plan for renewal of attack. CCA was ordered to by-pass Neustadt and advance in its zone to capture Kronach and establish a bridgehead across the Hasslach River. Similarly CC B was directed to advance in its zone and secure a bridgehead across the Hasslach near Marktzeuln. Coordinating with CC A, CC R was directed to move the 22nd Tank and 55th Armored Infantry Battalion forward to Oberlauter and release them to CC A; seize Neustadt with the 42nd and 63rd Armored Infantry Battalions and occupy the city until relieved by following elements of the 71st Infantry Division's 66th Regiment.

The 41st Cavalry was ordered to continue protecting the Division's Northeast flank; maintain contact with the 26th Infantry Division; and, in addition, to block the main road running into the Division's rear from Sonneberg, near Worltsdorf. The 183rd Field Artillery Group was to support and give CC R fire priority until the seizure of Neustadt. The 5th Regimental Combat Team, operating under the 11th Armored Division control, was directed to sweep the woods West of Coburg, protect the position of the 410th Field Artillery Group, and clear and occupy Coburg. The 5th Regimental Combat Team was to revert to the 71st Infantry Division after completing this mission and being passed through by the 11th Armored Division.

Moving forward at 2:00 p.m., CC R turned over the 22nd Tank and 55th Infantry Battalions to CC A. Establishing a command post at Wohlsbach, a small task force made up of Company B, 63rd Armored Infantry Battalion and Company B, 42nd Tank Battalion, was sent Northeast to develop the situation near Neustadt. Finding Neustadt undefended, the Task Force moved in and occupied the town at 8:15 p.m. Artillery fire, planned to harass the town during the night, and support of the attack were cancelled.



Breaking a roadblock

A squadron of fighter-bombers, running an armed reconnaissance Southeast of Coburg in preparation for the following day's action, discovered a small tank column and destroyed or disabled five of them. CC B was warned of armor in their projected zone.

At 7:40 p.m. an order was received from XII Corps outlining an alternate plan to have the Division turn East after reaching the second objective, relieving pressure on the 26th Infantry Division, and seizing the key communication center of Hof, along the Czechoslovakian border.

Resuming offensive operations according to the original plan, both CC B and CC A jumped off at 6:15 a.m. on April 12, 1945, so commencing a day of excellent progress against light resistance.

CC B moved through Coburg and advanced, meeting little or no resistance, on the Rohrbach-Freisendorf-Ebersdorf axis to defended Sonnenfeld which was cleared at 9:20 a.m. The command was split up into two task forces at Weidhausen, while artillery went into position to support the river crossing. One force, moving via Marktzeuln, found a good ford near a blown bridge across the Hasslach and continued across the river without opposition, coiling into positions near Ober Zettlitz. The other Task Force advanced on the Trubenbach-Marktgraitz-Redwitz axis unopposed, coiling for the night across the stream near Obristfeld, thus forming a solid bridgehead.

CC A's column reached Fecheim at 7:00 a.m. without incident. At 8:15 a.m. near Zedersdorf an enemy tank and a small group of infantry men were engaged and destroyed and the advance continued to Gestungshausen by 8:35 a.m. In the woods near Modlitz an estimated 200 enemy which had been by-passed by advanced elements, were engaged and captured or dispersed. While the column turned up the small valley toward Kronach, Cavalry elements attacked defended roadblocks in Kups which threatened the East



Tank enters town of Kronach, Germany, as buildings burn around it

flank. Infantry Task Force Hearn, in the lead, reached the outskirts of Kronach at 1:20 p.m. and Tank Task Force Wingard, following, cleared several towns along the route. After clearing Kronach of a few isolated defenders at 3:00 p.m. Task Force Hearn seized intact a vital bridge across the Hasslach River and captured 60 prisoners in addition to a German Army hospital housing 600 wounded Wehrmacht personnel.

Following artillery fire that left the town blazing, Cavalry elements entered Kups at 3:15 p.m. At 4:30 p.m. this strong point was reported clear and 53 enemy soldiers captured. For extra security and to acquire favorable terrain for continuation of the attack, Division ordered CC A to seize the dominating wooded hills Southeast of Kronach. This mission was accomplished by 6:15 p.m., with the fall of Weissenbrunn. At 4:45 p.m. the combat command post had been established at Schmolz. A CC R Task Force relieved CC A elements holding Kronach at 10:15 p.m., allowing the command to consolidate and prepare for the following day.

CC R followed CC A from the Wohlsbach-Oberlauter area at 9:30 a.m. Elements occupying Neustadt were relieved by the 71st Infantry Division at 10:00 a.m. Mopping up towns passed through by other elements of the division and clearing by-passed enemy pockets, the command cut across via Emberg and Gross Gernstadt, rejoining the CC B axis at Eberdorf about 1:10 p.m. Closing in on Ebersdorf the command was ordered to clear surrounding towns and woods for the emplacement of the 410th Field Artillery Group in the event of heavy opposition from Kronach. While clearing the area the 42nd Tank Battalion discovered nine Mark IV, one Mark V, and Mark VI tanks abandoned in a wooded area, all of which were destroyed by fire and demolitions. Without a single casualty the command captured 26 prisoners of war and killed at least six enemy soldiers.

SURRENDER LEAFLETS

Moving forward behind CC R, the 41st Cavalry continued to protect the Division Northeast flank during the day. At 4:30 p.m. the Squadron blocked the main road South from Sonneberg and set up a command post at Furth. Division Artillery, supporting CC B, continuously flew liaison plane missions ahead of the column, dropping surrender leaflets in towns along the route to advance. These leaflets admonished the civilians to fly white flags and surrender their towns without resistance to avoid total destruction and produced excellent results. Surrender leaflets were used throughout the central German campaign and were officially credited with expediting the command's movement and saving many American lives.

The Division command Post moved forward to Gertungshausen, arriving at 5:00 p.m. Enemy snipers, dug in the woods immediately to the East, inflicted several casualties, and a close support fighter-bomber strike was called in to strafe and bomb the enemy-infested area. The quadruple mounted 50 caliber machine guns of 575th AA Battalion and destroyers of the 705th Tank Destroyer Battalion were also employed to sweep the woods in the area with fire.

The 133rd Ordnance Maintenance Battalion moved into Coburg at 5:00 p.m. so as to render close support, and the 81st Medical Battalion joined the Division Train Headquarters at Ebersdorf at 5:30 p.m.

Operations Memo. No. 54 was issued by Division at 6:30 p.m., outlining a continuation of the advance to the East through Kulmbach and then a swing to the North and East to seize Hof and the road center nine kilometers West of Hof. Combat Commands were ordered to continue the advance abreast with CC B on the right. The axis of advance prescribed was Kulmbach-Muchberg-Hof. CC A was assigned the mission of seizing Kulmbach as it advanced and CC B was directed to take Munchberg and Hof proper. CC A was also directed to protect the North and West flanks and CC B the South and East flanks of the Division. The 41st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron was attached to CC B to block in the direction of Bayreuth when the Division turned East. An additional troop was assigned CC A to accomplish its flank protection mission. Restrained in Kulmbach by a Corps Directive received at 11:00 a.m., April 13, the Division made rapid progress for half the day, despite difficulties in rain-soaked terrain from a heavy storm during the night.

CC A continued the advance at 7:00 a.m. over a rapidly deteriorating secondary road net, reaching Gossersdorf at 7:25 a.m., Poppenholz at 7:40 a.m., and Lehenal at 8:25



a. m. Complete failure of the planned road caused a delay and another selected route was used through Grafendobrach which was seized at 10:05 a.m. Troop B, 41st Cavalry liquidated a defended roadblock four kilometers South of Lebenthat and as the advance continued 45 enemy troops were captured.

ENTERING KULMBACH

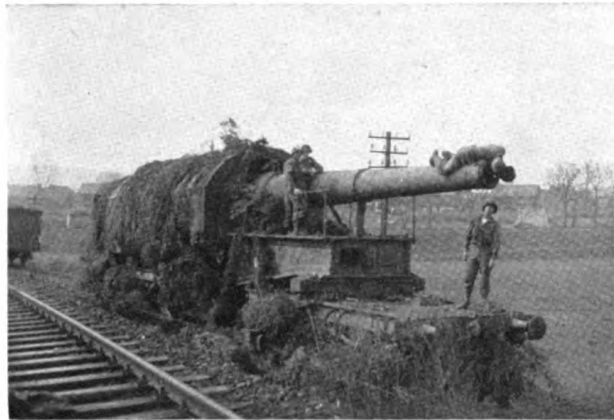
Task Force Hearn entered Kulmbach opposed by light small arms fire, and, with assistance from Troop B, 41st Cavalry, seized the city. High on a hill in the city a walled castle was found to be defended and it was reported that several hours would be required to clear Kulmbach. At midday CC A was directed to remain on the taken third objective and clear the city. Searching for better roads to the East, Task Force Weineandt proceeded to Unter Steinach clearing it by 2:30 p.m. Also shifting to the East, Task Force Wingard entered and cleared Stadt Steinach where two 240mm railroad guns were seized and a million dollar experimental electronic laboratory fell to the command. CC A's command post followed Task Force Wingard and opened in Stadt Steinach at 4:00 p.m. Kulmbach was cleared by 6:00 p.m. and the command consolidated positions in the Stadt Steinach-Unter Steinach-Kulmbach area for the night. During the day a 183rd Field Artillery Group liaison plane was shot down by enemy aircraft.

Leading CC B, Troop D, 41st Cavalry, moved out at 6:00 a.m., April 13, reconnoitering for a route that would by-pass Kulmbach to the West, avoid converging with CC A in that city, and isolate the city by cutting the main road to Bayreuth. Preceded by a liaison plane dropping surrender leaflets, the cavalry moved rapidly forward without resistance through white-flagged towns. Rothwind was reached at 7:30 a.m., and near Mainieus a prepared bridge was seized before it could be demolished.

Division orders went out at 7:46 a.m. to hold on the third objective so as to curb this rapid progress until CC A's attack on Kulmbach had been launched. Turning South across the Main River progress was slowed considerably by muddy secondary roads.

Cavalry reconnaissance elements entered the third objective area at 10:10 a.m. and Division artillery had taken up positions to fire on Kulmbach by 10:20 a.m. Moving out again at 10:45 a.m., preceded by cavalry, the column encountered great difficulty moving along soggy secondary roads. Light enemy resistance was overcome at Kelkendorf shortly after 11:00 a.m. Three enemy 88mm anti-tank guns were destroyed near Ober Kobach at 11:40 a.m. Occupying the third objective entirely and cutting the main road from Kulmbach to Bayreuth near Mangersreuth at 1:00 p.m., CC B coiled and cleaned up scattered resistance in the area.

Again desiring to develop the situation around Bayreuth because of good progress made by the 26th Infantry Division toward Hof during the morning, XII Corps directed the Division to send strong reconnaissance in that direction. A request for permission to send an entire combat command, due to the size of the city, was denied. Preparation to seize Hof on the part of the Division was diverted and CC B was accordingly ordered to send the 41st Cavalry toward Bayreuth on a reconnaissance mission.



Railroad gun captured by the 63rd Armored Infantry.

With CC A in Kulmbach an attempt was made to pass the following 41st Cavalry around CC B through the city but this possibility was erased because of a blown bridge near Burghaig. The 41st Cavalry made its way through CC B following the muddy by-pass to the West while engineers were dispatched to repair the bridge at Burghaig. Reaching the main road again at Mangersreuth about 4:00 p.m., the 41st Cavalry advanced through Rohr and Neudrossenfeld by 5:50 p.m. Clearing the town by 8:00 p.m. the command coiled and waited daylight before proceeding through a woodsflanked defile. In this rapid action 109 prisoners of war were taken.

CC R, ordered to clear the area East of Gestungshausen enroute, moved East toward the CC A axis ahead of Division troops, reaching Kronach at 12:50 p.m. Leaving a small holding force there to clear the main road between Kronach and Kumbach, the remainder of the command continued to Kirchleus. Eschbach and Losau were mopped up and three roadblocks reduced, thus opening the main roads to Kulmbach. In Weissenbrunn and Kirchleus CC R troops were strafed by four enemy planes which inflicted nine casualties. Elements of the 26th Infantry Division relieved the holding force at Kronach at 8:00 p.m. and they rejoined the main body in the vicinity of Kirchleus, where the command post was established.

During the afternoon enemy air was exceptionally active in the Division area. Besides attacks on CC A and CC R,



CC B pass through Bayreuth, Germany, birthplace of Richard Wagner

133rd Ordnance installations near Mainroth were attacked by four ME 109's. The 575th AA Battalion's accurate fire accounted for one enemy plane destroyed and one damaged. Division troops moved from Gestrungshausen to Mainleus on April 13, where the command post was established at 3:00 p.m. The 410th Field Artillery Group followed to pound Bayreuth with its long range 155mm guns during the night. The Long Tom 155mm guns were placing H and I fires on the city by 8:40 p.m., starting numerous fires. Verbal orders were received from XII Corps about 9:00 p.m., directing a small task force to seize and secure Bayreuth the following day, and otherwise to remain in place while the 71st Infantry Division passed through the Division. CC B directed to execute the Bayreuth task while all other major units were instructed to concentrate on maintenance. Road priority throughout the zone was granted to the 71st Infantry Division.

The objective of the day of April 14th, 1945, was the seizure of Bayreuth, a historic city famed for its annual spring festival and as the birthplace of Richard Wagner, the noted composer.

Task Force Foy, consisting of the 41st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, Company A of the 41st Tank Battalion, Company C of the 21st Armored Infantry Battalion, one platoon Company B of the 705th Tank Destroyer Battalion, and one platoon Company B of the 56th Armored Engineer Battalion was constituted for CC B elements. Organized into two task groups the troops moved out from Muchenreuth at 8:00 a.m. to seize Bayreuth. One maneuvering column moved via Muckenreuth through the woods to a crossroad and the high ground West of Bayreuth, reducing several roadblocks and occasional small arms fire. The second task force moved through Alten Plox and Hethersreuth to dominating terrain one kilometer North of Bayreuth. By 11:00 a.m. both groups commanded excellent observations positions and Division Artillery had moved

forward within range of the city. Considerable artillery fire was rained on the city but seemed only to make the enemy more stubborn in their defense.

SURRENDER OF BAYREUTH

With only insignificant forces to defend the city and a seeming desire for surrender on the part of the defending force, negotiations for the capitulation of Bayreuth were begun at 1:00 p.m. A captured German officer and the local Burgomeister who presented himself, were given until 2:30 to surrender and turn over all troops within the city. While negotiations were in progress, several tanks from the 14th Armored Division opened fire on Bayreuth from the North, in violation of the agreed truce. A request was made immediately to XII Corps for withdrawal of this unit from the area. CC B meanwhile, maintained close radio contacts with elements of the 2nd Cavalry Group, which had moved around to the South and West of Bayreuth, blocking several main roads and scooping up hundreds of enemy troops attempting to escape from the city.

At 2:10 p.m. the Burgomeister informed CC B that the majority of the enemy troops in the city were willing to surrender, but that he could not control the activities of fanatic groups.

Certain high-ranking German officers were reported to be withdrawing East to a castle at St. Johannes and intense artillery concentrations and air bombardment were directed against the establishment with good results.

Company C, 21st Armored Infantry Battalion, with a platoon of the 41st Tank Battalion entered Bayreuth from the North at 2:45 p.m. and seized control of the center of the city against scattered sniper resistance. Around the North and West of the city the 41st Cavalry captured 268 prisoners attempting to escape in small parties. A motorized regiment of the 71st Infantry Division arrived at 7:00 p.m. to occupy the city whereupon Task Force Foy withdrew to Neudrossenfeld at approximately 9:00 p.m. CC B elements, other than the 41st Cavalry, were released to parent units and returned to the Kulmbach area.

CC A uncovered a number of large German Army food and clothing warehouses in Kulmbach and placed guards over them.

From April 10, 1945 to April 14, the Division had intermittently advanced 80 kilometers from the Hildburghausen area to Bayreuth, clearing 115 towns, and evacuating 792 prisoners through the Division cage. Material captured or destroyed in the advance included 12 enemy tanks, four 88mm anti-tank guns, two 240mm guns, and four enemy aircraft. The advance was highlighted by the capture of Coburg and Bayreuth.



With the seizure of Bayreuth in midafternoon the Division had accomplished its assigned mission and as the day ended it assembled and continued preparations for further Third Army spearhead advances into Southern Germany. The Division devoted the day of April 15 to rehabilitation and maintenance, also guarding captured military installations within the area, especially in Kulmbach.

The 90th Infantry Division seized Hof during the afternoon and the 26th Infantry Division reached its restraining zone, placing its forward elements generally from Munchberg South to Gefrees. The 71st Infantry Division, passing through the 11th Armored Division, advance along the Southwest flank to the restraining line, generally from Gefrees South to Bayreuth. The Division command post was established at Kulmbach.

Fifty Hitler Jugend boys drilling in Losau were picked up by a CCR patrol and turned over to the Provost Marshal for evacuation through prisoner of war channels.

At 8:00 a.m. on April 16, CC R was directed to move to Kulmbach to relieve the 55th Armored Infantry of guard duties, in an attempt to equalize the rehabilitation opportunities of CC A troops. The 63rd Armored Infantry Battalion moved into Kulmbach first, remaining tank and headquarters elements followed.

Operational Directive No. 107 was received from XII Corps at 5:00 p.m., directing the Division to assemble in the Burgkunstadt-Stadt Steinach-Unter Steinach-Katschenreuth area and relieve all elements of the 26th and 71st



Artillery observation into Bayreuth

Infantry Division of guard responsibility in that area. The directive also informed that Kulmbach would remain under the 71st Infantry Division control while their command post was located in the city. Orders were issued to CC A to move the 55th Armored Infantry Battalion out of Kulmbach early the following day to relieve congestion.

Later in the evening the Division was warned by telephone that XII Corps would resume offensive operations to the

Southeast, possibly on April 19. The Thunderbolts were directed to relieve the 71st Infantry Division in the interim early April 17 and defend along the Corps restraining line between Gefrees and Bayreuth.

At 10:00 p.m. CC B was ordered to take over defense of a line between Bayreuth and Berneck from elements of the 71st Infantry Division early on April 17. Similarly, CC R was directed to take over the Berneck-Gefrees line. CC A was ordered to relieve CC R elements and resume the mission of supporting the defense. All other elements of the Division were ordered to complete maintenance work and prepare to move on two hours notice after midnight of April 17.

At 1:20 p.m. on April 17, CC B made a request that the 2nd Cavalry Group relieve the 71st Infantry Division in their location between Bayreuth and Seublitz. Relayed to XII Corps, the request was approved and CC B dispersed its elements across a narrower sector to the Northeast. CC B moved to the Bayreuth area at 7:30 a.m. to relieve 71st Infantry Division elements in the city and forward elements along the line Seublitz, Northeast to Berneck. The relief of forward elements was completed at 1:10 p.m. while troops occupying Bayreuth and posting of guards at the city's main factories, bridges, and other vital points, was completed at 6:00 p.m.

FURTHER ADVANCE

CC R initiated movement to its assigned sector at 7:30 a.m., and had completed relief of the 71st Infantry Division elements from Gefrees to Berneck by 11:30 a.m. The command post was established at Wirsberg about 11:00 a.m. CC A had restored previous guards on captured installations in Kulmbach by 8:15 a.m., freeing CC R elements. Division Artillery moved forward to Bayreuth during the day and assumed its support mission. The 490th Armored Field Artillery Battalion was placed in direct support of CC R, the 491st Armored Field Artillery Battalion in direct support of CC B, and both the 947th and 492nd Armored Field Artillery Battalions in general support.

On the basis of a Third Army directive, XII Corps G-3 met with corresponding staff officers of the 11th Armored Division and the 26th and 90th Infantry Divisions at Kronach about 3:00 p.m., and a plan for the next Corps operations was worked out. XII Corps assigned mission was the continuance of an advance to the Southeast, West of the Czechoslovakian boundary, initially as far as Cham and then to the Austrian border. The 71st Infantry Division was to move to the Southwest and pass to control of XV Corps, being replaced by the 97th Infantry Division coming in on the Northeast and assembling in the vicinity of Hof. The Corps plan envisaged a series of limited objective attacks by the Thunderbolts, followed up with zone clearance operations by the 26th Infantry Division



to the Southwest and the 90th Infantry Division to the Northeast along the Czechoslovakian border. Protecting that flank and moving Northeast was the 2nd Cavalry Group. On arrival, the 97th Infantry Division was to follow the 90th Infantry Division in the latter's zone, relieve the 90th and block to the Northeast along the Czechoslovakian border.

The Thunderbolts were specifically directed to continue the advance to the Southeast early April 19, to seize Weiden and Cham successively. The 183rd Field Artillery Group was directed to continue reinforcement of artillery fires for the 11th Armored Division and Supplementary Engineer Support provided.

Verbal orders were issued CC A and Division Troops to concentrate in the Bayreuth area the following day. CC B was directed to relieve elements of the 2nd Cavalry Group without delay.

Batteries B and C of the 128th AAA Gun Battalion, attached to the Division for enemy aircraft high-level attack protection, were placed under control of the 575th AA Battalion.

The zone assigned the Division for the coming operation was approximately 100 kilometers long, varying from 20 to 30 kilometers wide. Rolling terrain once again predominated, marked particularly by extensive wooded areas. Only secondary roads were apparent in a favorable direction with the exception of one 25 kilometer stretch. Numerous streams, including the Naab and Regen, offered favorable defensive or delay possibilities.

On studying a smaller scale map than that used when the Corps operation had been laid out, it was found that the first objective could not be skillfully approached without using at least one route through the 90th Infantry Division zone. Moreover, the assigned objective of Weiden,



Burgomeister, left, and warden of Bayreuth Prison, right, discuss surrender terms with representative of CC B on the outskirts of the town

appeared only as a small road center, while Grafenwohr, 20 kilometers to the West, appeared as a much larger and important locality.

With these factors in mind the Division plan for accomplishment of its mission was formulated. Two pair of mutually supporting routes were laid out for the major combat commands. One set favored the center of the Corps zone and led through Weiden. The second set were confined to the 26th Infantry Division zone on the Southwest flank and led through Grafenwohr. Both pairs contemplated a series of five zig-zag 20 kilometer advances to seize assigned objectives or critical terrain features within the Division zone.

Operations Memo No. 55 was published by the Division at 9:30 a.m. April 18, crystalizing the plan for the advance to Cham. CC B and CC A abreast, with CC B on the right, were directed to advance along prescribed axes as soon as possible after daylight on April 19, to seize designated successive objectives. The 41st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron was attached to CC A as of 6:00 a.m., April 19. CC A was directed to protect the Division's Northeast flank and maintain contact with the adjacent 90th Infantry Division. Division Artillery was to continue support of CC B, and the 183rd Field Artillery Group supporting CC A. CC R, after being relieved by elements of the 26th Infantry Division, was ordered to follow along CC B's axis in reserve.

SURRENDER OF BRANDHOLZ

At 11:00 a.m. the burgomeister of Brandholz arrived at CC R command post at Wirsberg seeking to surrender this town. The surrender was accepted and artillery fire which had been concentrated on the town was lifted. Elements of the 26th Infantry Division's 328th Infantry Regiment relieved CC R between Gefrees and Berneck at approximately 9:00 p.m., after being relieved in turn by the 90th Infantry Division on the North. The 490th Armored Field Artillery Battalion was released from direct support of CC R and reverted to control of the 183rd Field Artillery Group.

The Division command post moved from Mainleus at 9:30 a.m. reopening in the Western outskirts of Bayreuth at 12:30.

Late in the evening the Division was informed that it would be responsible for maintaining guards on installations in Bayreuth until relieved by troops of the Corps Area Defense Command, and that the relief could not be expected for at least two days. In order to free all of CC B's troops for the following day's attack, CC R was ordered to move into and assume responsibility for guarding all Bayreuth military installations.



End of the trail

During the temporary stabilization of the situation around Bayreuth the enemy had had time to patch together a few town defense detachments and prepare demolitions and roadblocks to the Southeast. School troops and miscellaneous headquarters units from the large military installations at Grafenwohr sought to stem the Division's advance.

April 19 proved to be the best day for the Division's air cooperation, as cool, clear weather predominated, with a slightly overcast sky and generally good visibility. Easing the way for attacking ground troops, the XIX Tactical Air Command fighter-bombers flew their first reconnaissance mission of the day to Grafenwohr at 7:05 a.m. Occupied military barracks were hit and set afire. Ahead of CC A, a second squadron bombed and strafed Kemnath at 8:15 p.m., dispersing or killing several hundred troops, and burning in motor transports as well as destroying four enemy aircraft operating in the area. An hour later Neustadt and Pressath were set ablaze by a third mission. Five missions against Grafenwohr later in the day, and in the face of considerable flak, started numerous additional fires, dispersed or destroyed a column withdrawing from the city to the Southeast and burned at least 15 additional vehicles. Surrender leaflets were dropped on towns by artillery liaison planes in advance of the CC B column.

CC A initiated the advance when Troop A, 41st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron moved out at 6:00 a.m. from the Neudrossenfeld area. The troop encountered a blown bridge at Neunkirchen but another bridge, one mile West of Seublitz, was found to be a suitable by-pass. The column made first contact in Iresau, this being quickly overcome and the advance guard reached Senoyenreuth at 10:50 a.m.

Meanwhile the main column of CC A had moved forward, coiling off the road in the Bayreuth area to await the progress of the advance elements and bypass of construction work at Neukirchen. Two roadblocks were encountered by Troop A, 41st Cavalry, in the woods, halting their

advance. On the arrival of Task Force Wingard consisting principally of tank and armored infantry elements, the attack resumed, the roadblocks and woods cleared, and the town entered at 1:40 a.m. Forty British prisoners of war were liberated at Kirchenlaibach.

THROUGH TRESSAU

Operating on the North flank, the 41st Cavalry broke up its defensive disposition and cleared light resistance in Tressau. Remaining CC A elements moved forward from coiling positions near Bayreuth at 12:55 p.m. Task Force Wingard reached Speichsdorf at 12:45 p.m., after clearing light resistance and Le Lettenhof at 1:20 p.m. The artillery fire and fighter-bomber strafing which Neustadt had received enabled it to be taken without opposition. Pressath was seized against remaining scattered resistance at 3:05 p.m. and two enemy tanks destroyed in the fight for this town. Task Force Wingard proceeded South through the woods against light sniper resistance to Grafenwohr, entering the city from the North, in coordination with CC B. Infantry



Sniper resistance at Kemnath

Task Force Hearn mopped up and completed clearing Pressath while the 41st Cavalry, skirting Kemnath to the Northeast, worked its way South into Pressath for the night. All elements closed into Grafenwohr or Pressath by 8:40 p.m. In the still undamaged outskirts of Grafenwohr a command post was established.

CC B meantime, gathered its scattered defence forces at daylight of April 19, and renewed the advance from Bayreuth at 7:30 a.m. Proceeding through the previously cleared 71st Infantry Division zone into Greussen, the column swung East into enemy territory. Losau was reached without opposition at 9:35 a.m. by advanced elements. Division artillery went into positions and both towns were pounded and set afire under heavy concentrations of fire. Vorbach, on the first report line, was seized at 10:00 a.m. in the first contact action. Bypassing blistered and littered Vorbach, Ober Bibbach was seized at 11:30 a.m. after



The Red Cross was always there

cellar holdout opposition had been encountered. Resuming the advance shortly after 1:00 p.m., the command passed through Tremmersdorf at 1:30 p.m., Eschenbach at 2:30 p.m., and Stegenthumbach at 3:40 p.m. At the river line South of Stegenthumbach light resistance was encountered, but quickly overcome. Continuing through Grunhnd, the command, in coordination with CC A, entered Grafenwohr at 5:00 p.m. and commenced clearing the battered Southern portion of the city. At 5:30 p.m. the Division reported the city taken. An enemy retreating column South of the city was fired on by Division Artillery with good results.

CC R relieved CC B guards in the Bayreuth area during the morning. At 1:20 p.m. CC R was ordered to avoid the CC B axis, continue the advance and clear the Ober Bibach area for anticipated occupation by the 410th Field Artillery Group. CC R cleared six towns during the afternoon, including Schlammersdorf and Frankenberg. From these towns and the woods surrounding them 28 prisoners of war were captured and one 120mm mortar seized and destroyed. The command post opened in Schlammersdorf at 6:30 p.m.

The Division command post, preceded by the command control party, left Bayreuth at 1:00 p.m. and reopened near Vorbach at 2:40 p.m. The 705th Tank Destroyer Battalion preceded the Division Headquarters to Vorbach and secured the area. The 56th Armored Engineer Battalion and the 575th AA Battalion followed Division Headquarters to Vorbach and at Neunkirchen, the 56th Armored Engineer Battalion supervised construction of a 70-foot Bailey bridge to replace the blown structure. The 133rd Ordnance Maintenance Battalion and the 81st Medical Battalion joined Division Train Headquarters and moved forward to the Bindlach airport supply area to the Northeast of Bayreuth.

GRAFENWOHR SEIZED

During an 11-hour operation the Division had advanced 33 kilometers, seizing its first objective of Grafenwohr. In this thrust, over 700 prisoners of war were captured, 15 towns seized and cleared, and at least 20 enemy combat and transport vehicles were destroyed.

Restrained from continuing the advance, by Corps order, the Division spent the day of April 20, clearing and consolidating in the Grafenwohr locality. Also conducting reconnaissance to the South, anticipating future operations. Huge stores of enemy material, munitions and foodstuffs were uncovered as elements of the Division combed Grafenwohr and its suburbs. An Ordnance depot was seized containing 30 tank hulls, 14 88mm guns, 11 nebelwerfers, two 150mm guns, and 500 Teller mines; also an estimated 300,000 rounds of munition, including mortar, light artillery, panzerfaust, and small arms. A Quartermaster depot in the city, consisting of five large three



Watches, cameras or pistols

story buildings, filled with coffee, canned meat, canned fruit, and huge quantities of wheat and oats, fell intact. One of the largest Chemical Warfare dumps in Germany was discovered in a wooded dispersal area running about five kilometers along the road. It contained many varicolored smoke pots and an estimated 3,000,000 chemical artillery shells of 75, 88, 120, 150, and 240mm calibers. The Wermacht lost permanently, in addition to the capture of Grafenwohr, the facilities of a well-established Panzer Corps school and a recruiting and replacement training center for other troops.

CC A spent the morning clearing the Northern half of Grafenwohr, the woods adjacent to the city, and the woods along the main road from Grafenwohr to Pressath. Guards were established on some of the German Chemical, Ordnance, and Quartermaster installations in the near Grafenwohr. Troop A, 41st Cavalry, reconnoitered to the South along the Schwarzenbach-Hutten-Kaltenbrunn-Freihung



axis during the afternoon, meeting scattered small arms resistance at Hammerguns, North of Kaltenbrunn, and at Durmast. Just North of Freihung a roadblock was reduced and the troop entered the town at 4:00 p.m., reporting bridges there intact. Other elements of the 41st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron reconnoitered from Hutten to Mantel, encountering only scattered small arms resistance. CC B guarded the ordnance depot and other remaining military installations in Grafenwohr. A request was



The capture of Grafenwohr

approved to move the 41st Tank Battalion South to Kaltenbrunn, to relieve the congestion in shambled Grafenwohr and secure a more favorable position for continuation of the attack. The battalion arrived at Kaltenbrunn at 11:30 a.m. A liaison plane air reconnaissance to the East reported the presence of troops and a few fires in Weiden. At midday Division Artillery reported that an L-5 liaison plane pilot, flying a distance reconnaissance mission to the South, observed three fighter aircraft, identified as Russian Yaks, near Amberg. The Yaks were marking targets for heavy bombers operating in that vicinity.



A view of Grafenwohr from the Central tower

Moving from Schlammersdorf at 11:30 a.m., CC R mopped up woods and cleared the route to Eschenbach where the command post was established at 4:30 p.m.

During the afternoon the 56th Armored Engineer Battalion removed booby traps from a Grafenwohr ammunition dump. The Division command post and Division troops moved forward from Vorbach to Grafenwohr, closing between noon and 1:30 p.m.

ADVANCE TO PRESSATH

The 26th Infantry Division advanced to Pressath and Hasselbrunn closing up considerably. The 90th Infantry Division made some progress through wooded areas to the Northeast, as also did XX Corps' 71st Infantry Division along an excellent road to the Southeast.

A TWX was received from XII Corps at 6:20 p.m., halting all units on Phase Line B, which the Thunderbolts had reached with the seizure of Grafenwohr. The Division was directed to continue the advance on Corps order only, and infantry divisions were ordered to limit daily gains to three or four miles beyond the line. All Divisional units were notified to expect to remain in place an additional 24 hours.

During the first half of April 21, advance elements of the 26th Infantry Division moved up abreast of the Thunderbolts at Grafenwohr and Parkstein. The 90th Infantry Division to the Northeast, and leading elements in Windschenschenbach late in the afternoon.

Early in the morning Major Division Units were directed to conduct a thorough search of the area surrounding Grafenwohr to locate suspected additional caches of munitions and material scattered in the woods in the vicinity. This search resulted in the discovery of a train with 16 carloads of ammunition and a large ammunition dump in a wooded dispersal area. Eleven new two and half ton trucks and six trailers loaded with radio equipment were also uncovered.



General view of Grafenwohr from the Central tower



Verbal instruction from XII Corps, received at 11:00 a.m., directed the 11th Armored Division to resume the advance early on April 22, seizing Weiden, and then continuing to seize Cham. The Corps plan of attack remained substantially unaltered. The newly arrived 97th Infantry Division, on the Corps Northeast flank, was directed to successively relieve the 90th Infantry Division along the Czech border as the latter Division advanced to the Southeast. The Division's request for the relief of guard duties was granted and the 26th Infantry Division asked to assume all such duties in the Grafenwohr area.

The Division plan of attack was outlined in Operations Memo No. 36, issued at 3:30 p.m. CC A's mission was that of seizing Weiden, and continuing the advance as far as Nabbur. CC B was directed to assist CC A's attack on Weiden from favorable positions to be seized in the vicinity of Mantel, and thereafter to continue the advance to seize Schwarzenfeld and a bridgehead across the Naab River. CC R was ordered to move to Grafenwohr, with the possible task of advancing South along the main route to seize Hirschau. The 183rd Field Artillery Group was charged with coordinating all fires relating to the seizure of Weiden.

CC A was directed to move the 41st Cavalry, followed by the 276th Field Artillery Battalion, to the vicinity of Parkstein, to reconnoiter and mark the route of advance, also to secure favorable artillery positions from which the objective could be fired upon at night. The Cavalry squadron continued reconnaissance against no resistance and proceeded to Neustadt, occupying the city at 6:00 p.m. A Wehrmacht hospital, with 64 patients and a staff of 23, was captured in Neustadt, where the cavalry organized positions for the night.

At 3:30 p.m. CC B moved its advance guard and the 974th Field Artillery Battalion from Grafenwohr through Hutten to Mantel meeting no resistance. The advance guard, pushing to Rupprechtsreuth to secure defilade positions for the 974th Field Artillery Battalion, cleared and protected the area while the artillery went into action. Weiden was rained with a heavy volume of artillery fire throughout the night under 183rd Field Artillery Group direction. During the early morning of April 21, enemy stragglers drifted over into Moos and attacked supply elements of the 42nd Tank Battalion coming forward from the rear. CC R sent a force from the 42nd Tank Battalion back to resweep the area from Moos to Schlammersdorf. Moos was taken under fire and burned down. In a skirmish in the woods an enemy ammunition truck was destroyed and ten enemy soldiers killed. By 1:25 p.m. Schlammersdorf and the surrounding woods were cleared. The Eschenbach area was also cleared during the day and a total of 36 enemy stragglers captured.

CC A guards in Grafenwohr were relieved by elements of the 26th Infantry Division by 8:00 p.m., but CC B's

forces, also guarding installations there, remained unrelieved. The Division was assured that CC B would be relieved by early the following morning.

ACROSS THE NAAB RIVER

The Division drove a three-pronged spearhead through scattered enemy resistance on April 22, taking Weiden and seizing a bridgehead across the Naab River, 30 kilometers further along the way to the final objective. Both air and ground operations were hampered by frequent showers and generally deteriorating weather.

CC A's Tank Task Force Wingard left Grafenwohr at 6:45 a.m., to join forward elements of the cavalry advancing on Weiden from Neustadt. Two and a half kilometers North of Weiden the cavalry encountered two roadblocks but these were reduced in a half hour. Task Force Wingard passed through the Cavalry, entering Weiden against light small arms resistance and seizing it at 9:25 a.m. Meanwhile, Cavalry elements operating on the East flank reached



Getting information

Gornitz at 7:52 a.m. and on through Wilchenreuth at 9:07 a.m. Elements of the 90th Infantry Division were contacted at 9:58 a.m., two kilometers Northwest of Neustadt. The nearly 2,000 Allied prisoners of war who were liberated and several hundred German soldiers captured in Weiden made the problem of restoring order an arduous task.

Cavalry elements were sent South to seize the crossing of the Naab River at Rothenstadt after another roadblock on the South edge of the city of Weiden had been reduced by them. Two defended roadblocks were encountered at Rothenstadt at 10:25 a.m. Attacking in conjunction with elements of CC B on the West, the blocks were reduced, the town cleared, and the bridge seized intact by 11:25 a.m.

The bulk of CC A remaining in Weiden, cleared the city and established order. The Division issued orders to the command around noon to press forward in the attack, leaving but a small force in Weiden until relieved by the



26th Infantry Division. Led by Troop A, 41st Cavalry, CC A advanced to Luhe where a bridge was seized intact and the town occupied by 2:30 p.m. At this point the Cavalry was passed through by tank elements who proceeded South to seize Wernberg against scattered small arms and sniper fire. Many enemy soldiers surrendered. One kilometer West of Wernberg a railroad overpass over the main road was actually blown by the enemy as the city was captured, but the main route bridge over the Naab River was reported in good condition. Continuing Southward along the good road, tank elements reached Pfreimd at 4:00 p.m. The city was seized at 4:30 p.m. after lightly held enemy defenses had been smashed.



The air field at Cham

A bridge at Pfreimd which had been weakened by demolition was strengthened and the column resumed the advance South toward Nabburg. An emissary from Nabburg contacted leading elements and surrendered the city, which was occupied without resistance at 7:15 p.m.

The command post moved to Pfreimd at 8:15 p.m. and all units of the command were assembled in the Pfreimd-Nabburg area. The command had captured 1,294 enemy troops during the day, and liberated approximately 2,000 Allied prisoners of war. Two prime movers, 66 vehicles, 815 rifles, 61 machine guns, and 66 panzerfaust were also seized and destroyed.

CC B's main body moved from Grafenwohr at 7:00 a.m. on April 22, and proceeded through Hutten and Mantel, contacting the advance guard. The column coiled off the road East of Mantel, and Division Artillery put its two remaining light battalions into position, preparing to support CC A's attack on Weiden. In the event that CC A had serious trouble in Weiden an infantry task force was made ready for resistance. When Weiden was seized at 9:25 a.m. by CC A, the command resumed the advance to the South, reaching Etzenricht at 9:38 a.m. Reducing several roadblocks, Etzenricht was entered and a light force

sent to the East on Division order to assist CC A in the capture of the Naab River bridge at Rothenstadt. The command, although encountering lonely scattered sniper fire in the way of enemy resistance, was slowed considerably on a poor backwoods road net, and crossed the Heidanaab River near Unterwidenau and continued to Beudorf by midday.

HOLZHAMMER CLEARED

Continuing through dense woods, Holzhammer was cleared and 30 surprised prisoners taken. Air OP spotted eight German vehicles moving South of the advancing column near Kenmath. Under artillery fire four of these vehicles were burned, two disabled, and all personnel killed or dispersed. Kenmath was entered by the advancing column at 3:30 p.m. Pushing slowly on over soggy secondary roads through Got.....orf, Gosselsdorf, Inz.....rf, Fre.....ng, Saulnhof, and Grafenricht, the command entered Schwarzenfeld at 8:30 p.m. A vital bridge across the Naab River was seized intact, the town cleared by 9:00 p.m., and 40 prisoners captured. The entire command concentrated in the Schwarzenfeld area by 10:00 p.m. An inspection of the Naab River bridge revealed it was incapable of withstanding Division loads and work was started by engineers to span the river with a treadway bridge.

CC R meanwhile, moved from Eschenbach at 7:00 a.m., reaching Grafenwohr at 8:00 a.m. where the column coiled to await the outcome of CC A's attack on Weiden. When Weiden was seized the command was ordered to move directly South on a good road to seize Hirschau, and open a direct route to the Southeast for trailing Division elements. Resuming the advance Freihung was reached at 10:30 a.m. Meeting no resistance at Schonbrunn the column turned Southeast. The city of Hirschau was occupied at 11:30 a.m. and cleared after scattered small arms fire at the Western edge of the city had been reduced. Orders were issued to CC R at 5:00 p.m., based on the reported failure of the CC B road North of Scharzenfeld, to open a main road all the way East to the Naab River near Werberg, and protect the bridgesite while engineers repaired the crossing during the night. The task Force dispatched on this mission reported their arrival at the objective at 7:40 p.m., while the remainder of the command assembled at Schnaittenbach for the night.

The Division issued radio orders to all units at 8:30 a.m., directing a continuation of the advance to Cham as soon as possible after daylight of April 23. Division Troops and CC R were advised that a shift to the CC A axis, via Wernberg, would be made the following morning. A request from the engineers to replace the damaged bridge at Pfreimd with bailey material was approved, on the understanding that the road would be reopened by 8:00 a.m. on April 23.



Cham, the final Corps objective, was seized by the Division on this day of April 23, as they advanced 20 kilometers to the East and then an equal distance to the Southeast, through crumbling enemy resistance. Only two reconnaissance missions were possible to aid the Division as intermittent rain and cloudy weather limited tactical air cooperation.

At 1:00 a.m. on April 23, CC A at Pfreimd, reported the surrender of an Hungarian force of 490 men, together with their equipment and transportation. Company B, 22nd Tank Battalion, was approached before daylight and arranged for the surrender of an Hungarian force East of Nabburg. By 4:00 a.m. 800 prisoners had poured in from this unit.

Initiating the advance with cavalry elements at 6:15 a.m., the column cleared Willnof at 7:30 a.m., capturing 154 enemy soldiers enroute. Pertolzhofen was reached at 8:45 a.m. It was revealed by reconnaissance that the planned road to the East would not support the command. Swinging to the North through Neider Murach, an Allied prisoner of war camp, containing 150 Russians and 16 Americans, was liberated.

HUNGARIAN FORCE SURRENDERS

Meanwhile, an Hungarian force of at least 1,200 officers and men, located in the Beunberg-Pertolzhofen-Oberveichtach area surrendered en masse to the command.

Pushing Eastward, advance elements occupied Winklarn at 11:30 a.m., where 1,000 British and two American prisoners of war were liberated. Overtaking an enemy column near Grassersdorf, Task Force Wingard took the lead and soon overwhelmed all resistance. The town of Rotz was seized and an additional 160 American prisoners freed.

The 41st Cavalry, flank-protecting along a separate route to the North, advanced swiftly to Gaisthal where an enemy column of four vehicles was overrun and destroyed. Turning to the South and East, an Allied prisoner of war camp was liberated at Haag, about 3:00 p.m., releasing 600 British prisoners. Elements of Task Force Wingard occupied Pemfling at 2:30 p.m. Continuing against no resistance, the column was halted by a roadblock on the Northern outskirts of Cham. The block was reduced, Cham entered, and a link-up made with CC B a short time later.

An order received from the Division at 5:00 p.m., directed Cavalry Task Force Weinand to move Southeast and secure the apparently vital bridge across the Regen River at Miltach. Finding the main road incomplete as it was represented on the map, the reinforced Cavalry troop crossed the river to the South at Cham and proceeded East to Miltach. The bulk of the command, meanwhile, assembled in the Cham area, with the command post opening there at 5:55 p.m. Guard details were established at several towns along the route to handle the thousands

of prisoners of war captured during the day. German Field Marshall Kesselring's private train was discovered and seized in the badly bombed railyard at Cham.



The Hungarians brought their wives

CC B resumed the attack at 6:40 a.m., moving rapidly against no resistance to reach Kennath at 7:26 a.m. While artillery was brought forward to cover the wooded South flank, the column halted and the remaining combat elements cleared the treadway bridge at Schwarzenfeld completed during the night. Continuing to Beunberg light resistance was overcome, a force of some 750 Hungarian soldiers surrendered, and 3,000 Russian and Polish slave laborers liberated. The column's advance was slowed as it approached the Regen River as an original 16,000 starved slave workers from the Flossenburg and Buchenwald concentration camps, their 1,300 German SS Guarded column overrun, clogged the route. At 11:15 a.m. Stamsried was seized and several hundred British soldiers, prisoners of the Germans since Dunkerque, were released. Posing fell at 11:30 a.m., as the last remnants of the Nazi column guard were overrun and killed or captured, and the starving liberated slaves spread out over the countryside looking for food. Striking rapidly to the East the column recrossed the river and entered Cham shortly after 1:00 p.m. against light sniper resistance. The city was seized at 2:00 p.m., thus the Division's assigned mission was accomplished.

Division Artillery, sighting infantry in position to the South of Cham, smothered the area with air burst fire. At 2:55 p.m. a large enemy airport fell to the command, two and one half kilometers Southwest of Cham. Here, 50 enemy aircraft, many of them operational, were seized and destroyed. Just before dark three enemy aircraft landed at the airport not knowing the installation had been captured and the pilots were taken prisoners.

The command post moved to Cham at 4:00 p.m. and units assembled in the Cham-Unter Traubenbach area for the night. A total of 1,700 prisoners of war were captured during the day. The starved slave labor, still alive



when the column was finally liberated, numbered approximately 7,000. The road between Stamsried and Posing and the adjacent fields, were dug with shallow improvised graves containing the bodies of at least 100 shot down in cold blood.

The Division troops column left Schnaittenbach at 9:00 a.m. on April 23, crossed the Naab River at Wernberg and turned South on the CC A route to Pfreid. At this point, a supporting Engineer company, instead of installing a Bailey bridge the night before as directed, attempted an early morning rush job, delaying all trailing elements four hours. Reaching Allendorf after noon, elements of the 705th Tank Destroyer Battalion, opened a cross route to the CC B axis at Neunburg. Slowly following CC B, the head of the column reached Stamsried at 3:00 p.m. where the Division command post was reestablished. Along a steep stretch of the Road just Northwest of Stamsried, seeping water undermined the roadbed and it collapsed under excessive usage. Vehicles had to be towed or driven through singly. All elements closed in Stamsried before midnight.

CC R moved from Schnaittenbach to Friedersried at 11:45 a.m. The column did not reach Wernberg until 3:00 p.m., being delayed behind the Pfreid bridge. At 7:20 p.m. the command authorized to assemble in the



Panzerfaust halt the attack into Regen

Neunburg area for the night due to the road failure near Stamsried. The command post was opened there at 9:20 p.m. At 10:45 p.m. CC R was instructed to take over the guarding of all prisoners at Neunburg and the following morning to cut across directly East of CC A's route to Rotz, proceeding as far Southwest on the CC A route as Cham.

ADVANCE TO THE SOUTHEAST

Being unaware of Corps future plans, orders were requested by radio and were answered by a telephone call from the

XII Corps G-3, outlining the impending operation. A continuation of the advance to the Southeast to join with Russian forces near the the German-Austrian border, was directed. A formation of three Divisions abreast, with the 11th Armored Division in the center, the 90th Infantry Division on the left and the 26th Infantry Division on the right was prescribed. The 97th Infantry Division was directed to follow the 90th along the North flank, sealing the Czechoslovakian border in successive sector reliefs. No major changes in the attached or supporting troops was prescribed. The 11th Armored Division was directed to advance to the Southeast as far as the Austrian border in the 10-kilometer-wide zone, seizing successive objectives of Regen and Grafenau, and clearing the Division zone. Patrols up to, but not beyond the Austrian border were prescribed.

The narrow, 100-kilometer long zone of operation assigned the Division was, for the first time in history, characterized principally by a single excellent highway running in a favorable direction for a distance of 60 kilometers. This route was in marked contrast to the restricted roadnet available as the Austrian border was neared, even through portions later proved to be still under construction. The flank was blocked to the South by the Danube River; to the North the tall wooded mountains along the Czech border barred access in all save a few transverse pass areas. The Division zone terrain was generally wooded and mountainous, cut perpendicularly by rivers draining into the Danube to the South.

Vividly awakened to the stark reality of German brutality, evidenced by atrocities and the thousands of starved human slaves that had been liberated in and around Cham, the Thunderbolts needed no urging to quickly continue the decisive action which had placed it, so far, 50 kilometers ahead of all Third Army units toward the alleged German National Redoubt Area.

Troop D 41st Cavalry, was attached to CC B in the early morning of April 24, joining the command in Cham at 7:30 a.m. As the weather cleared about 8:30 a.m. CC B renewed the attack Southeast along the Alpine highway.

A secondary road through Vilzing to Mitach required constant engineer maintenance and slowed the advance considerably. First contact was made with the enemy in the vicinity of Voggerzell where sporadic mortar fire fell on the column. Some small arms resistance was reduced and the advance continued. Defended Viechtach fell by 10:00 a.m. with the cessation of resistance by small arms equipped enemy troops. An unsuccessful attempt was made by the enemy to make a stand on the wooded hill crest in the vicinity of Arnesried. Tank fire destroyed several enemy vehicles.



ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF REGEN

On reaching the outskirts of Regen it was discovered that a 100-foot high bridge spanning a 300-foot gorge and tributary stream of the Regen River had been destroyed. Two additional air squadrons bombed and strafed Regen and enemy columns trying to vacate the city. Earlier in the morning a mission had been flown on the city. At least 25 enemy motor transports were destroyed. Dismounted infantry elements, covered by artillery and tank fire, advanced on Regen from the West and South. Considerable small arms and mortar fire were received from the city. One vehicle was lost just South of Regen through mines. All resistance had been overcome by 4:15 p.m. and the city was reported clear.

CC A's task of clearing the zone behind CC B was cancelled around midday and directed to continue in the advance to the Austrian border. Following Division Troops, CC A was able to reach the vicinity of Viechtach by 3:00 p.m. In the late afternoon CC A was directed to attempt a bypass of Regen to the North through Zwiesel. Cavalry elements sent forward on this mission encountered a ponderous roadblock one kilometer West of Bodenmais. It took three hours work to remove this block and the openly lighted town was entered at 11:00 p.m., without opposition. The remaining elements of CC A assembled around Viechtach for the night. Shortly before midnight CC A was directed to press its attack through Zwiesel at daylight the following morning.

CC R moved East from its location at Neunburg and proceeded to Cham via Rotz during the morning. At 11:41 a.m. CC R was ordered by Corps to remain until relieved by the 26th Infantry Division, or, until release from Corps could be obtained. At 8:00 p.m. the command was further directed to establish and maintain contact with the 26th Infantry Division at Ober Trubenach to the Southeast.



Roadblock at Regen

Following CC B, Division Troops moved from Stamsried to Pattersdorf during the middle part of the day. The 575th Anti-Air Battalion destroyed one FW 190 and one enemy liaison plane over the airfield near Cham. Elsewhere in the Division area an ME 109 and two more FW 190's were brought down. The 705th Tank Destroyer Battalion reconnaissance patrol sent Northeast of Paresdorf during the afternoon discovered abandoned German vehicles in the woods North of Teisnach.

At 1:00 p.m. on April 25, Operations Memo No. 59 was distributed, outlining the Division plan for operations between Regen and the Austrian border. Because of the blown bridge at Regen CC A was directed to bypass the city and lead the attack to the objective around Freyung. CC A was due to clear a zone in the rear of CC A and then advance on the South to a portion of the objective around Waldkirchen. From North to South, CC B, CC A, and CC R, were all assigned zones for clearance after the final objective had been seized, and order to push patrols to the Austrian border and Czechoslovakian border. A request for the release of CC R, except for two companies at Cham, was made of XII Corps, in order to expedite the clearance of the forward area.

On completion of the nightlong construction of a bridge and two-kilometer bypass near Regen at 6:30 a.m. on April 25, CC A once again started moving its vehicles East. Kirchdorf was passed through without opposition but considerable small arms and automatic weapons fire was encountered at Epperschlag. Dismounted infantry elements cleared Epperschlag, leaving it in flames, while the main body continued its rapid advance through the town. When reached at 11:40 a.m., Schonberg was the scene of savage fire fight. They were prepared by tactical air and artillery fire, then the tank-infantry teams went through the town, capturing and clearing it by 1:00 p.m. In a wooded area South of Schonberg numerous small groups of panzerfaust and rifle-equipped enemy were encountered and heavy combined arms resistance developed as the column broke out of the woods and continued South along the highway towards Passau. Crossing the Ilz River, the bulk of the command continued to the East through Perlesreut to seize bridges across the Ohe River near Prombach. Eliminating a blocking force near Preying the original advance elements crossed the Ilz River to the Northeast and rejoined the command at Perlesreut, where the command post was established. Later in the evening a strafing enemy plane was brought down over the artillery position.

CC A's 41st Cavalry moved from Bodenmais, East to Lansdorf where slight resistance was met. Lest the route through Zwiesel proved unsuitable the main body of CC A remained in the vicinity of Viechtach. Such proved to be the case. Extensive bomb craters rendered the road impassible and no bypass through the mountain country was found so the cavalry counter marched to the main



highway at Patersdorf. A little after midday the entire command resumed the march, following Division Troops along the highway through Regen.



Regen is captured

Troop A, 41st Cavalry, which had been allowed to double the Division column, turned East at the Kirchdorf road junction and continued on a route North of and parallel to that of CC B. When entering Schwarzach at 2:30 p.m. an overtaken enemy column was brought under fire. The cavalry continued after killing 20, taking 140 prisoners and destroying undetermined number of vehicles. Grafenau was entered and occupied without resistance at 4:00 p.m. In the town a Japanese diplomatic legation of 37 men, women, and children was captured. Veering East, Neudorf, Hohenau, and Kreuaberg were successfully entered after three defended roadblocks had been reduced. The cavalry assembled for the night in Kreuzberg, guarding the bridge across the Resch River. The bulk of the command followed to Grafenau where the command post was established.

The request for clearance of CC R East from Cham was granted early in the morning of April 25, and the command was directed to resume the march, following CC A. Good progress was made until the CC A column was overtaken near Viechtach. At 2:55 p.m. CC R was ordered to proceed as far East as Rinchach and there to protect the Division near by blocking all roads in the vicinity.

NEW BRIDGES FOR OLD

During the first half of the day the 56th Armored Engineer Battalion concentrated all efforts on the Regen bridge and bypass. Because of the usual one to two day delay in obtaining Bailey bridge material a treadway was laid in the early morning hours to insure the flow of traffic at daylight. A second bridge was constructed along side the treadway when Bailey material arrived around noon. Two sections of the 575th Anti-Air Battalion guarded the bridge site from enemy aircraft which were overhead quite often during the day.

Division troops moved from Patersdorf to Schonberg where the Division command post was reestablished.

During the night CC A was directed to leave the 41st Cavalry in place, preparatory to a return to Division control. Resuming the advance at 8:00 a.m. on April 26, 1945, CC A's Task Force Wingard moved through the Cavalry at Kreuzberg and turned South toward Freyung. The column was halted one kilometer North of Freyung by a destroyed bridge. Tracked vehicles and tanks forded the river while wheeled vehicles used a bypass discovered to the Northeast. Engineers began construction and maintenance work immediately to keep the column moving. After the 490th Armored Field Artillery Battalion and Task Force Wingard had crossed the stream, the bypass collapsed and construction was renewed under sporadic small arms fire from surrounding woods. Freyung was entered and cleared by 10:30 a.m. against minor resistance, this town being CC A's portion of the final objective. German Brigadier General Von Horst, an ordnance officer, was among those taken prisoner in the city.

Adhering to a prearranged plan, Task Force Wingard swung East from Freyung and advanced to Unter Grainet. From this point a full track armored patrol, made up from Company B 22nd Tank Battalion, Company B 55th Armored Infantry Battalion, Battery A 490th Armored Field Artillery Battalion, and a 41st Cavalry Reconnaissance Platoon, was dispatched East toward the Austrian border. From time to time the advance was delayed by mountain trails and blown bridges. Hitler Jugend resistance was brushed aside at Lackenshausen and at 6:30 p.m. this patrol entered Austria from the West, being the first allied unit to do so. The patrol returned to the main body at 7:00 p.m., its mission accomplished although no meeting was effected with the Russian Army. The bulk of CC A assembled in the Unter Grainet area. The 41st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron was detached from CC A at 8:00 p.m. and left in place for a short rest.

CC B renewed its attack to the East at 7:40 a.m. Light resistance was encountered before taking Alzesberg at 8:30 a.m. The bridge across the Ohe River, South of Prombach, gave way after being crossed by advanced elements and delayed the column for over an hour until another bridge was located to the North. Advance forces continued to Rohrbach, seizing it after light resistance. Crossing the Osterbach River, Steinerleinbach was reached at 12:15 p.m.

Division Artillery, in the meantime, went into position near Rohrbach and neutralized or destroyed numerous enemy infantry positions along the South flank of the axis of advance. Six enemy aircraft strafed the column, one of which was shot down. The 21st Armored Infantry Battalion captured the town of Waldkirchen after it had been softened by artillery fire, completing the seizure of the Corps final objective by 3:00 p.m.



INFANTRY WELCOMED BY POPULACE

Continuing East to Wollaberg, the infantry was openly welcomed by the populace. Continuing further to the East, a point one kilometer Northwest of Gollnerberg was reached at 7:15 p.m., and from here the Austrian border could be observed clearly. The patrol returned to Wallaberg before dark, being short of gasoline. The bulk of CC B assembled in the Waldkirchen area.

An ME 109 was shot down out of a flight which strafed CC R near Rinchach at 7:30 a.m. CC R, following Division Troops, moved to the vicinity of Grafenau during the afternoon. The 42nd Tank Battalion moved to Schonberg and established strong defenses to the South. Seventy two prisoners of war were captured during the day, adding to the several hundred being guarded in the Division cake at Schonberg. Schonberg was bombed at 11:00 p.m. by enemy aircraft but no damage was inflicted on military targets.

Taking into consideration the prospect of considerable delay at the Austrian border, no friendly troops within 60 kilometers of the bulk of the Division, and a strong South flank threat, Operations Memo No. 60 was distributed at 11:30 p.m. The movement of the 41st Cavalry to the South flank near Rohrbach was the only major change in the plan.

Division Troops moved from Schonberg to Grafenau about midday and then followed CC A to Freyung where the combat post was reestablished at 4:30 p.m. Battery A, 575th Anti-Air Battalion, fired multiple 50 caliber and 37mm guns on an enemy mortar position one kilometer West of Schonberg and completely destroyed it. The end of the 56th Armored Engineer Battalion column was attacked by fire from enemy SP guns operating in the Schonberg area and some damage inflicted on the bridge train before the arrival of tank elements from CC R.



The 41st Cavalry in Rohrbach

Late in the afternoon Engineers installed a 36-foot treadyway bridge, North of Freyung, easing the flow of traffic over the vital spot.

Enemy air was particularly active and bold in the Division area during the day. Thirty-five enemy sorties were observed. Late in the afternoon P-51 Mustangs strafed German aircraft West of Freyung and shot down the enemy in a two minute dogfight. Five enemy aircraft were brought down by the 575th Anti-Air Battalion during the day.

During the month of April the constant activities of vehicles and the urgent need for rehabilitation of personnel caused a request to be made of XII Corps for a 48-hour maintenance period. Corps replied directing the Division to prepare for continuation of the attack on April 28.

The Division had advanced a total of 210 kilometers in the seven active days of operation since leaving the Bayreuth area, seizing both Corps objectives and complete its assigned mission on the Austrian border. Despite enemy delaying tactics and numerous physical obstacles the Third Army spearhead continued at 30 kilometers per day in a week of shifting offensive operation. Prisoners of war captured amounted to at least 9,394 including mounting numbers of Hungarians, and 3,362 Allied prisoners liberated.

Fifty enemy aircraft were overrun on the ground and at least 11 shot out of the air. Some 315 other enemy transport and combat vehicles were either destroyed or captured. Among rear area installations overrun were German Wehrmacht base depots, a large operational airfield, and throughout all was evidence of the rotten slave labor core of the Nazi system.

During the night of April 26, a battalion of the 183rd Field Artillery Group monitor station was established and for several days a continual attempt was made to establish



Mopping up



radio voice with the Russian Army, through the services of a Russian officer liberated three days before at Cham. On April 27, 1945, CC A patrols operated to the East and North of Unter Grainet. One of these patrols reached the Czechoslovakian border, Northeast of Bishofsreut, without meeting resistance.

CC. B patrols, operating to the East and Southeast during the afternoon, reported no enemy encountered. CC R maintained defensive roadblocks protecting the rear of the Division and sent patrols to the South and West. Three kilometers North of Tittling a patrol from Schonberg uncovered an enemy AT and infantry defensive position astride the Alpine highway.

Moving from Dreuzberg at 7:20 a.m., the 41st Cavalry marched South and closed in the Rohrbach area about an hour later. Troop B, which had been released to the Squadron from CC B, established and maintained a roadblock across the principal highway to the South. About 9:40 a.m. enemy light and medium artillery commenced falling in the Rohrbach area at the rate of five or six rounds every 20 minutes. This continued until about 3:50 p.m. when clearing weather made it possible for Division Artillery to observe and neutralize the fire. Artillery concentrations on Wilhelmsreut and Hutthurm minimized observed enemy activity and placed harassing fires into enemy infantry positions South of the Osterbach River. Division Artillery expended 759 rounds on 19 missions during the day. Twenty-two prisoners of war were captured and four vehicles lost to enemy fire.

PLANS TO MEET THE RUSSIANS

Operational Directive No. 111, the Corps plan for renewal of operations, received about 10:00 a.m., outlined action to join forces with the Russian Army South of Czechoslovakia and protect the Army North flank. A renewed drive to the East was prescribed on relief to the West along the Czechoslovakian border by elements of VIII Corps. The Thunderbolts were to lead the attack as far as a mountainous area North of Linz, followed by the 90th Infantry Division on the North flank and the 26th Infantry Division on the South flank.

A short time after noon all major units were advised of an extended maintenance period. Twenty-four new M-26 tanks, received the day before, were checked over, test fired, and distributed to companies within the three tank battalions. Division Trains directed the movement of all elements at Cham forward to the Division area during the afternoon. Combat elements rejoined CC R after making several patrol checks to the North and South along the Alpine highway and all Division Service elements, except the 81st Medical Battalion, closed in the Freyung area before dark. The 56th Engineers replaced the treadway North of Freyung with a more permanent Bailey bridge.

Meanwhile the Division plan for renewing action was formulated. Operations Memo No. 61 was prepared and distributed at daylight of April 28.



Near the Austrian border

During the night of April 27 a G-2 plain clothes operator returned, confirming in detail that the German SS Panzer Division "Das Reich" was hard at work forming a protective crust for the Passau area North of the Danube. Dug-in infantry positions, Anti-tank guns, and artillery, were being built up astride the main road from the Osterbach River line to an enemy straggler collecting point just North of Passau. During the day of April 28, major command patrolling activities continued toward the Austrian and Czechoslovakian borders, also South towards Passau. A CC A patrol crossed the Czech border near Sperr Buhel and fired into the town of Gsenget where white flags immediately appeared. Yet another patrol to Breitenberg encountered 200 enemy infantry and drove them into the woods Northeast of the town at the cost of one tank destroyer damaged and three enlisted men wounded. A CC B patrol met resistance at Sonnen and captured 15 German and 40 Hungarian prisoners of war. Another CC B patrol captured a medical company and its equipment near Sonnen, attempting to make its way to the Passau area, taking a Major General, 20 other officers, 20 nurses, and 30 enlisted men prisoners. Commencing at 10:45 a.m., enemy artillery shelled the 41st Cavalry defensive positions near Rohrbach area. Division Artillery promptly neutralized this fire. CC R picked up an additional 150 prisoners of war while patrolling in the Division rear and maintaining blocks. The 81st Medical Battalion closed in Freyung at 12:25 p.m., completing the concentration of all Division elements.

TOWARD DANUBE

A verbal order was received from XII Corps at 9:30 a.m. to clear the area in the 26th Infantry Division zone between the Ilz River and the Austrian border, as far South as the Danube on April 29. Fragmentary orders were immediately issued to major commands.



The Division planned a heavily infantry and artillery reinforced CC B, making a deliberate dismounted attack to the Southwest until the enemy crust was broken. CC B, plus the 41st Cavalry and the 63rd Armored Infantry Battalion, was ordered to clear the zone East of the Ilz River and West of the Austrian border, South of the Danube. On completion of this mission the command was to assemble in the vicinity of Ruhmannsdorf and prepare to continue on a more southerly route to the Southeast.



The super-race

CC A was directed to move a task force to Wollaberg, to be followed later by the bulk of CC A, meanwhile continuing to patrol in its assigned zone. The 183rd Field Artillery Group was given the task of supporting CC A and reinforcing CC B during the latter's attack, thereafter supporting CC A and CC R. Division Artillery was to support CC B for the duration of its offensive operation,



Picking up some German "Brass"

then to support CC B and the 41st Cavalry. One platoon of 155 mm guns from the 510th Field Artillery Group was attached to Division Artillery who were given the mission of destroying bridges over the Ilz and Danube Rivers

around Passau. CC R was to continue its mission until the arrival of 26th Infantry Division elements, thereafter moving to Freyung and protecting the Division Northeast and Northwest flanks in a prescribed sector.

On being released from CC B, the 41st Cavalry was to assemble its command near Hutthurn and protect the Division West and South flank.

CC B, reacting without delay, dispatched a task force from Waldkirchen at 1:30 p.m. April 28, to seize the high ground North of Bernhardsburg for artillery positions from which the action toward Passau could be supported. A minefield was bypassed and a roadblock reduced enroute as slow progress was made. The 492nd Armored Field Artillery Battalion went into positions near Leinbach at 10:30 p.m.

Leaving Grafenau at 5:00 a.m. on April 29, the 63rd Armored Infantry Battalion marched South to Rohrbach CC B launched its attack toward Passau at 8:30 a.m., with all artillery in position and the weather clearing for the better. On the West flank, the 63rd Armored Infantry Battalion entered and cleared Ulrichsreut against light small arms opposition.



Digging the Krauts out of the ruins

Continuing South through a minefield to Wilhelmsreut, the town defended by small arms, panzerfaust, and anti-tank gun, was attacked. The 21st Armored Infantry Battalion, reaching Deching simultaneously, reduced anti-tank fire by the use of artillery. At midday the bitter resistance in Wilhelmsreut was completely overcome. Rejoining the 21st Armored Infantry Battalion, the 63rd Armored Infantry Battalion continued the attack to the South until stopped by defenses at Grosstannensteig at 3:30 p.m. After concentrations of artillery had blasted the town the 63rd Battalion attacked directly South while the 41st Tank Battalion protected the exposed West flank and the 21st Battalion outflanked the town to the East through some woods. The attack was slowed by enemy small arms, pan-

zerfaust and anti-tank fire but the town was seized by 4:55 p.m. Meanwhile, a platoon of 155mm guns from the 745th Field Artillery Battalion arrived in the area and by 4:00 p.m., despite active enemy fighter aircraft, air CP's had adjusted fire on the Ilz and Danube River bridges in the vicinity of Passau.

The ground attack at Kringell next encountered five enemy tanks, two of which were destroyed by artillery fire. The remaining three withdrew towards Passau.

Defended Hutthurm was attacked from the West and Northeast at 5:30 p.m. by two infantry battalions, supported by tank and artillery fire. Enemy small arms and automatic weapon fire, in addition to mortar and artillery, failed to stem the advance. Hutthurm was seized and occupied by 6:45 p.m. During the dismounted 10-kilometer advance of the day, 150 of the enemy were killed and several hundred taken prisoners. Approximately 30 casualties were surrendered among CC B elements.

BLOCKING THE THREAT

A large enemy force of undetermined strength was reported at 11:15 a.m., proceeding South from Czechoslovakia towards Kreuzberg. A small task force from the 705th Tank Destroyer Battalion was immediately ordered to the North toward Kreuzberg to check on this report and temporarily block any threat that might actually develop.

CC A was ordered simultaneously to have an air OP check the Division North flank for enemy activity and to organize a balanced battalion-size task force for movement toward Kreuzberg on short notice. About 1:00 p.m. the 705th Tank Destroyer Battalion reported no enemy activity in Kreuzberg. Mortar fire was reported falling on Freyung at 5:30 p.m., just South of Division Headquarters. By spraying all surrounding wooded hills with 575th AA Battalion multiple-mount 50 calibre machine guns, this action was diminished. Three kilometers North-

east of Freyung an enemy Storck liaison plane was shot down. During the night one battery of 90mm AA guns moved forward from Regen to Waldkirchen.

The 705th Tank Destroyer Battalion was relieved at 3:00 p.m. on Division order by Task Force Blalock, consisting of one company of infantry, one company of medium tanks, and one battery of field artillery.

CC R 42nd Tank Battalion took over the blocks and patrols of the 63rd Armored Infantry Battalion on its departure from Grafenau before daylight. Patrols in the Division rear picked up an additional 150 enemy stragglers during the morning, in addition to 73 belligerent Austrian Youth Movement boys. At 1:55 p.m. CC R was ordered to move to Kreuzberg, to relieve the CC A and Division Troops elements in the vicinity and assume its planned protection of the Division North flank until again relieved by following infantry division elements. The command moved from Grafenau at 3:00 p.m., closed in the Kreuzberg-Freyung area by 6:00 p.m., and an hour later had effected the relief and assumed responsibility for protection of the Division North flank.

Shortly after noon XII Corps directed the Division to resume the attack to the Southeast on the morning of April 30. No change in the Division mission was contemplated. Just recently assigned to XII corps, the 5th Infantry Division was substituted for the 90th Infantry Division and directed to clear the Corps zone into Austria on the North flank. CC A and CC B were directed to resume the advance as soon after daylight as possible on April 30. CC B, in addition, was directed to release the 63rd Armored Infantry Battalion to CC R at Waldkirchen when the 41st Cavalry was in position South of Hutthurm. 41st Cavalry elements were to be released to Division control when the head of the CC B column reached Hauenburg. Division Artillery was directed to leave the 745th Field Artillery Battalion 155mm guns in



Sweeping into Kreuzberg



Maintenance has top priority



position and to continue its North flank protection mission until the arrival of motorized 5th Infantry Division troops on the CC A axis.

An aerial check conducted on Passau about 8:00 a.m. on April 30, showed that a railroad bridge in the vicinity on which fire was adjusted the previous afternoon, had been completely destroyed. Air activity was minimized during the day by continual heavy rain, and confined heavy armored vehicle movement to the rapidly deteriorating road net in the vicinity of the Austrian border.

ENTERING WEIGSHEID

CC A initiated movement with Troop C, 41st Cavalry, at 7:00 a.m. April 30. The cavalry passed through Stublhauser at 9:00 a.m. and advanced to a point two kilometers North of Wegscheid by 9:20 a.m. Following a more Western Route, Task Force Hearn made first contact with defending enemy infantry in Kasberg at 9:51 a.m. The infantry task force cleared Kasberg quickly, meeting the



Nearing Wegscheid

next resistance in the woods North of Wegscheid, which were cleared by noon. As the attack approached the Austrian border town of Wegscheid and the surrounding wooded hills small arms, automatic weapon, anti-tank, and enemy artillery fire developed. Anti-tank fire destroyed three mud-bound tanks. Bringing forward artillery enemy strong points were subjected to heavy concentrations. The soggy terrain making maneuver impossible, Task Force Hearn launched a dismounted infantry attack to seize the high ground West of the town. The Task Force seized this ground at 5:00 p.m. whereupon they reorganized and entered Wegscheid at 8:00 p.m., clearing it by 9:45 p.m. CC A assembled in the Kasberg-Wegscheid area for the night. During the day's action 77 Germans were killed and 137 prisoners captured, against a loss of 21 casualties, three of which were officers. Twelve enemy artillery and anti-aircraft pieces were destroyed for a loss of five medium tanks to enemy anti-tank fire.

The 63rd Armored Infantry Battalion was released from CC B during the night to CC R control at Hutthurm. CC B renewed its advance to the Southeast at 7:10 a.m., April 30, passing through Buchelberg to encounter several anti-tank guns to the Northeast. This resistance was overcome as well as some dismounted infantry resistance in the woods near Wollar and the command reached Hauzenburg at 8:50 a.m. A liaison plane dropping surrender leaflets into towns in advance of the column sighted two companies of enemy infantry in vehicles along the road near Ruhmannsdorf and directed artillery fire which dispersed the column. CC B released the 41st Cavalry to Division control on reaching Hauzenburg. Continuing through Jahrdorf the command's advance was slowed as it reached Griesbach at 10:15 a.m. by small arms fire. Pushing through Griesbach, panzerfaust and heavy small arms resistance in the woods, two kilometers to the East, temporarily halted the advance. After an artillery concentration had been aimed on the wood approximately 100 German infantrymen surrendered en masse, 825 Hungarian soldiers filtered into the Battery B, 491st Armored Field Artillery Battalion position Northwest of Greisbach and surrendered.

Continuing the attack to the East as far as Wildenrann and then Southeast, a heavily defended roadblock North of Ober Kappel on the Austrian border stemmed the advance at 1:30 p.m. In mid-afternoon CC B was directed not to advance beyond the Austrian border pending the outcome of CC A's attack on Wegscheid. Most of the afternoon was spent in deliberate dismounted action to reduce the roadblock and eliminate sniper fire within Ober Kappel. A key bridge on the approach to the town was secured intact. When it became apparent that assistance would not be required to reduce Wegscheid the command assembled in the Griesbach-Ober Kappel area for the night. Advance elements reached Crettenbach late in the afternoon.

On relief by elements of the 5th Infantry Division about mid-day, CC R moved from Freyung to Wollaberg, closing at 6:30 p.m. Patrols operated from this point until dark, protecting the Division North and West flanks. Fifty-one prisoners of war were captured and moved to Sonnen where jurisdiction over the Division Prisoner of War cage was assumed.

During the morning the 41st Cavalry was subjected to light artillery fire while continuing its blocking mission to the South of Hutthurm. When relieved at 2:30 p.m. by elements of the 26th Infantry Division the squadron followed CC B to Ruhmannsdorf where it assembled for the night.

As shown by the determined resistance of the enemy along the Austrian border on April 30, the Wehrmacht had built up a considerable force Southeast of the Division

Mission Accomplished



Near the railroad yards.



Soldiers fire on enemies across border in blazing town of Kepple, Austria, shortly before the end of war in Europe

Staff Sergeant Bolin Green Jones of the 63rd Armored Infantry Battalion.



Concentration camp inmates.



Yugoslavs, holding a banner marked "Tito" cheer the entrance of soldiers into Linz, Austria

Mauthausen





American and Russians at Amstettin, Austria.



A troop of the 41st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron meeting the Russians at Amstettin, Austria.



Hail to the liberators.



Soldiers of the 56th Armored Engineers employ German prisoners to repair roads near Linz, Austria. This road is used by the Army supply route.



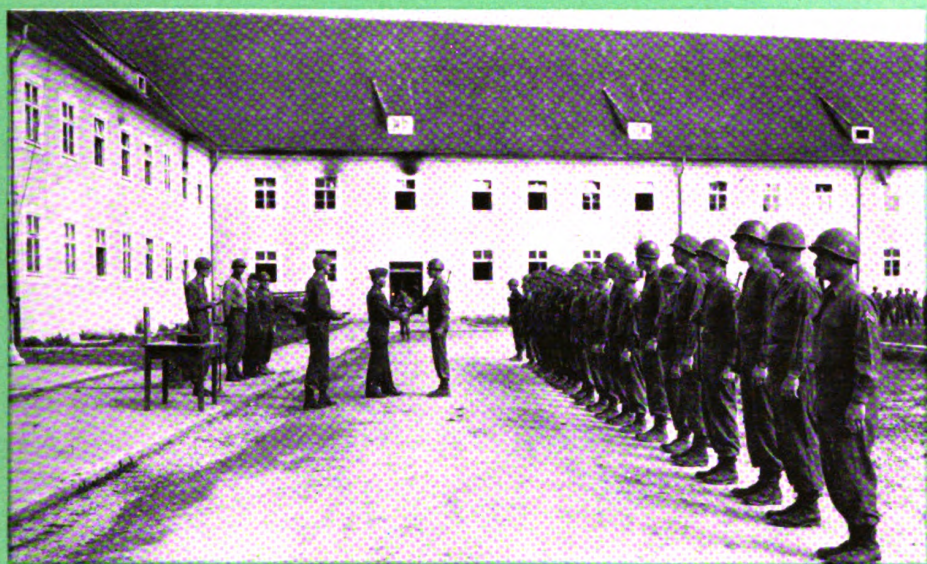
Russians meeting Americans at Kirchslag, Austria

An American and Russian soldier pose together for the photographer atop a tank.





Back to garrison.



An award ceremony.



*American and Russian
officers meet.*

Headquarters company tanks fire a salute for General Clark.



Troops stand at attention awaiting General Mark Clark's arrival at Gmunden



General Dager entertains the Russian commander in Batman HQ in Gmunden.



A combined guard.



Russian soldiers at prisoner of war turnover



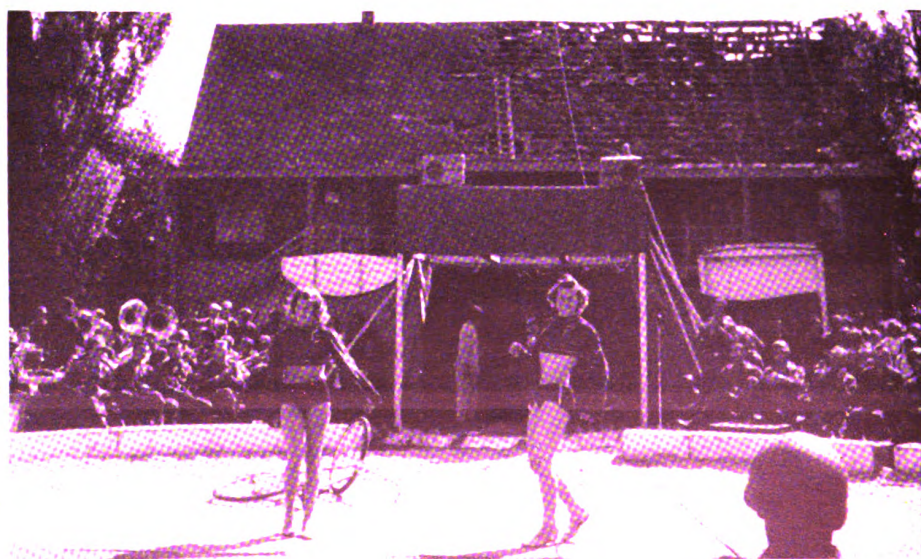
Dreaming of home.



Entertainment by our own boys.



Circus Kobrad performers entertain soldiers.



Circus Kobrad performers.



during the past several days of inactivity. Prisoner interrogation revealed that the 487th Mobilization Division was coordinating operation of several separate miscellaneous enemy groups.

A RUSSIAN PLANE

Unseasonal snow falling continuously throughout the day

of May 1, limited the Division's observation and maneuverability and minimized air activity. About mid-day, during a break in the weather, a twin-motored bomber bearing the white triangle Russian marking was observed over the Division area but no communications were interchanged. Division organic strength was 613 officers and 10,162 men, some 50 officers short of allowances.



END OF WAR





Crossing the Austrian border

CC A's Infantry Task Force Hearn launched an attack from Wegscheid at 6:30 a.m. May 1, to seize a bridge one kilometer East, which was taken by 7:15 a.m. Passing through the Infantry, Troop C of the 41st Cavalry, reached Kramerschlag without opposition and continued to Kallerschlag where a roadblock on the Eastern edge required about an hour to reduce. Continuing East to Peilstein an enemy motorized pursuit was blocked by defended roadblocks in the town. By midday the roadblocks were reduced and demolitions widened the narrow streets within the town enabling the new T26 medium tanks to pass through.

A half kilometer East of Peilstein a bridge across the little Muhl River was seized undamaged by the column was delayed while three 500 pound charges were removed. The column was halted again two and one half kilometers East of Peilstein by anti-tank and small arms fire issuing from a wooded hill North of the road. Task Force Hearn resumed the lead and reduced this resistance by artillery supported dismounted action and continued to defended Diendorf at 4:00 p.m. Once again dismounted infantry was called upon to take the town as steep mountainous terrain and wet weather prohibited armored maneuver. The town was captured by 5:42 p.m. and two 88mm guns destroyed.

On Division orders to cut the main North-South road at Oepping before dark, all artillery was brought forward within range of the objective. Continuing East from Diendorf, Task Force Hearn seized the town without opposition by 6:30 p.m. The task force assembled for the night, establishing roadblocks across the main highway and accepting the surrender of some 650 Hungarian soldiers who wandered in from the surrounding territory.

The command post was established in the vicinity of Peilstein where remaining elements concentrated. During the day the command killed 80 and captured 710 prisoners of war, four 88mm guns, three 40 mm guns, and

several miscellaneous enemy vehicles during the day, losing 15 casualties.

CC B renewed it's advance from the Austrian border at 6:30 a.m. on May 1, the advance guard reaching a road junction one kilometer West of Hohenschlag at 7:20 a.m. An hour later the command halted just West of Krien due to rapidly bogging roads, awaiting further reconnaissance. A better route was discovered to the South and the column backtracked through Karlsbach to reach Pfafrkirchen by 9:15 a.m. A defended roadblock was encountered and reduced on the West edge of Lembach and the advance guard continued slowly Northeast against a number of small arms defended roadblocks while the main body closed in Lembach about 11:20 a.m., pending development of a suitable crossing over the Little Muhl River.

A dismounted Infantry force, supported by artillery, continued to the Southeast toward Starz where the bridge was found to be destroyed. A tank supported Infantry Task Force relieved the advance guard and slowly reduced a succession of roadblocks to reach a crossing in the vicinity of Kronge at 4:00 p.m. In spite of heavy small arms fire from the East side of the Little Muhl River Canyon a small bridgehead was established. This bridgehead was well established by 6:00 p.m. and a dubious road net developed. Late in the afternoon during a short let-up from snow and drenching rain, a Division Artillery liaison plane reconnaissance indicated that the Neufelden bridge across the Muhl River was intact. Neufelden and the bridge site were subjected to heavy concentrations of artillery air-burst fire throughout the night. Having further difficulty with mud-clogged roads, the bulk of the command assembled in Lembach by midnight.

The 41st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, following CC B, moved from Ruhmannsdorf to Wildenranna late in the afternoon. Several patrols South to the Danube River discovered no enemy activity or possible river crossing sites. Following CC A, Division troops moved from Sonnen to Wegscheid where the command post was established late in the afternoon.

CC R was directed to send a task force from Wegscheid to Wildenranna to open up a lateral ground communication between CC B and CC A, and return about mid-day. This task was accomplished by 4:30 p.m. and 300 Hungarian prisoners captured. On Division order the bulk of the command moved from Wollaberg to Kasberg.

CROSSING THE MUHL RIVER

At 1:45 p.m. a liaison officer brought forward verbal instruction from XII Corps covering a change in the Corps plan. The Division mission was unchanged, except that the objective was not to include the city of Urfahr, on a bridgehead established. The 26th Infantry Division the North bank of the Danube opposite Linz. Any bridge found across the Danube was to be seized at once and



was to stop on the Austrian border, clear South to the Danube River and establish a bridgehead across the Danube East of Passau. On completion of this bridgehead the 4th Armored Division, assembling in the Regen area was to attack Southwest through the bridgehead and seize Salzburg. Troop C, 41st Cavalry, commenced the CC A attack South from Oeppling at 6:45 a.m. on May 2. One kilometer North of Rohrbach a roadblock was reduced and the town seized by 9:00 a.m. After removing several 500- and 100-pound bombs from the road in the vicinity of Rohrbach the advance continued swiftly down a good road to a blown bridge two kilometers North of Neufelden. Aided by Task Force Hearn, forward elements advanced through Neufelden to the Muhl River without opposition to find all the bridges in the vicinity blown. Task Force Wingard reduced several roadblocks to reach the vicinity of Haslach only to find the bridge across the Muhl River at this Northern location also blown. All additional attempts to find a crossing of the Muhl River during the day were unsuccessful.

While artillery moved forward to positions Northwest of Neufelden engineers located a ford site at Neufelden and completed preparations for its use by 5:15 p.m. Infantry elements of Task Force Hearn, mounted on tanks, crossed to the East without delay and established a bridgehead unopposed. CC A established its command post at Neundling. CC R was ordered forward to Oeppling in mid-afternoon. Due to the previous arrival of the 5th Infantry Division elements at Oeppling the command proceeded only as far as Peilstein. The 5th Infantry Division took over defense of the Muhl River line on the North flank near Schlagel during the afternoon.

CC B road reconnaissance failed to find stable footing East of the Little Muhl River in the vicinity of the Krondf bridgehead. In addition, the road from Lembach to Krondf became completely unusable during the early morning.

Other reconnaissance indicating that the roadnet East of Starz was usable, engineers constructed a treadway bridge at this crossing site by 6:00 p.m. after considerable difficulty with approaches, and followed, by 11:00 p.m., with a trestle bridge to ease the flow of traffic.

At 8:00 a.m. on Division order, the 41st Cavalry moved Southeastward from Wildenranna to clear a usable road from Ober Kappel to Lembach through Hofkirchen. Occupying Hofkirchen by 10:00 a.m. a good road net was reported which was used by service and supply elements of CC B. Patrols reconnoitering South to the Danube River between the Austrian border and the Little Muhl River were unable to locate any suitable bridge sites for Danube River crossings. These patrols captured 720 prisoners of war during the day and two enemy liaison aircraft were shot down in the vicinity of Hofkirchen at 2:00 p.m. Division troops moved from Wegscheid forward to Rohrbach during the afternoon.



The Engineers got these tanks across

Operations Memo No. 63 was prepared and distributed at daylight of May 3, outlining the Division plan for seizing the final objective. The 5th and 26th Infantry Divisions were to continue following the Thunderbolts as originally planned. CC A was directed to seize the Gramastetten artillery position area and with artillery supporting to attack and seize Urfahr from the Northwest. CC B, with the 41st Cavalry and the 491st Armored Field Artillery Battalion attached, was to seize and block the highway at Zwettl, continue to the Southeast and block the highway leading to Urfahr at Galleneukirchen, and finally, to maintain a block along the East flank or attack Southwest to assist CC A in seizing Urfahr. CC R was directed to reinforce CC A with additional infantry elements if required, and to relieve CC B of its blocking mission to the North in the vicinity of Zwettl when CC B moved Southeast to Galleneukirchen.



Attacking Zwettl

Rain and snow continued to fall on May 3 as the Division approached the final objective and CC B elements broke through to cut the main North-South road into Linx and Zwettl.



The Muhl River rose some 18 inches during the night making it impossible to use the ford until the river receded early in the morning. The 490th Armored Field Artillery Battalion was the first to cross the ford at 6:00 a.m., May 3, followed by Task Force Wingard.

MORE ALLIED PRISONERS LIBERATED

CC A renewed the advance, Task Force Hearn leading East and then South to rejoin the main highway at Emersdorf by 10:25 a.m. At St. Ulrich 180 Allied prisoners of war were liberated. Advanced elements encountered a defended roadblock at Emersdorf and waited for artillery to go into position. The roadblock was not cleared until 12:55 p.m. On Division order tanks were put in the lead to accelerate the advance, a critical bridge was overrun and captured three kilometers Southeast of St. Martin and the head of the column reached Rottenegg 30 minutes later only to have critical bridges blown 100 yards ahead of the leading vehicle.

While Task Force Hearn sought alternate routes to continue the advance in the vicinity of Rottenegg Task Force Wingard moved Southeast on another route from Nieder Waldkirchen to Herzogsdorf where enemy small arms fire resistance slowed the advance. Task Force Wingard reduced this small arms resistance and advanced to seize a bridge across the Rodly River near Gramastetten. An enemy strongpoint, reported in front of Task Force Hearn at Walding was subjected to concentrated artillery fire. Task



A mortar barrage precedes an attack on Zwettl

Force Wingard encountered persistent and determined small arms and panzerfaust resistance but never-the-less continued a house-to-house advance into Gramastetten, in spite of darkness, to seize this important locality by 11:45 p.m. The bulk of the command assembled along the main highway Northwest of Rottenegg for the night, CC A establishing its command post at Gerling.



GUSEN CONCENTRATION CAMP. Worked in stone quarries until too weak for more, hundreds of political prisoners and slave laborers were left to die in the Gusen concentration camp at Muhlhausen, Austria. Even after the camp was liberated May 12th, inmates continued to die at the rate of 100 per day. Investigators were told that the camp was primarily for political prisoners, but it has been learned that an unknown number of American fliers were killed there also. Two soldiers of the Division, and liberated political prisoners of the camp, look at the body of a guard killed by inmates after they had been released from their Nazi yoke.

Following CC A across the Neufelden ford during the morning, Division Artillery progressed to a point astride the Neufelden-Urfahr highway near Gerling at nightfall. The 183rd Field Artillery Group, accompanying CC A, preceded the Division Artillery to the same general locality. CC B's advance guard, moving East from Lembach at 11:00 a.m., advanced to the vicinity of Alten Felden by mid-day. Continuing directly East the command passed rapidly through St. Johann and St. Veit to reach Waxenberg at 5:45 p. m., unopposed and liberating a British prisoner of war camp. A Division order at 5:30 p.m. directed the advance to continue to Zwettl, if possible, and the column wound through more mountainous terrain to reach Ober Neukirchen, but into the main North-South road at Linz and reached Zwettl by 7:45 p.m. Assembly was slow due to spot collapse of the road on which travel was necessary. The command post was established in St. Veit and the command closed in the St. Veit-Zwettl area. One hundred feet of Bailey bridge material was picked up by a 56th Armored Engineer officer patrol on the Austrian border and engineers rapidly repaired the main highway bridge at Neufelden, opening the road to traffic at 7:30 p.m.

Division troops moved from Rohrbach to Neufelden, following CC A, where most elements infiltrated across the river crossing bottleneck.

Late in the day CC R moved from Peilstein to Alten Felden, closing after dark. Company C, 63rd Armored Infantry Battalion, who were brought forward to the main



highway bridge site, crossed immediately after the Bailey bridge was installed and established security around the bridge for the remainder of the night.

CC A continued clearing the Rottenegg-Gramstetten-Walding area shortly after daylight of May 4. The route between Rottenegg and Gramstetten had been opened by Cavalry elements by 11:48 a.m. Enemy aircraft were active in the area around noon but no damage was inflicted. Task Force Hearn completed clearing Walding at 2:05 p.m.

Later in the day the task force was subjected to occasional artillery fire from the direction of Ober Ottensheim. Direct anti-tank fire and artillery, in considerable volume, fell on elements in Gramstetten during the day.

SURRENDER OF LINZ

At 2:05 p.m. an emissary from Linz arrived in Gramstetten. He claimed full authority and desired to surrender the city, with the stipulation that the German troops be allowed to withdraw to the East to fight the Russians. His terms were, of course, refused and he was given a two hour period to surrender the city and all troops, unconditionally. Task Force Wingard gained the critical high ground East of Gramstetten by 5:51 p.m. after fighting slowly up steep slopes and through woods during the afternoon. Anti-aircraft installations in that vicinity were destroyed and 200 prisoners taken. Further attempts to advance were halted by fire from pillboxes and well camouflaged positions covering open ground Southeast of the wooded hill West. Task Force Wingard withdrew to the West and joined the bulk of the command, concentrating in the Gramstetten area by 9:00 p.m. despite continuing enemy artillery fire.



MAUTHAUSEN CONCENTRATION CAMP. Crippled Russian and Polish prisoners stand in front of armored Car of the Division, near Linz, Austria

The 41st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron led CC B East from Zwettl at 8:00 a.m. The column advanced through Hellmonsdt and Reichenau, reaching Schwarzendorf at 11:15 p.m. Altenberg was occupied at 1:15 p.m. The bulk of the command coiled off the road while the 41st Cavalry turned East and advanced on Gallneukirchen to develop the situation and the 491st Armored Field Artillery Battalion went forward into position. From interrogation of prisoners captured during the morning, defense of Gallneukirchen was anticipated, and a coordinated attack planned. However, the 41st Cavalry advanced rapidly against practically negligible resistance, reached Gallneukirchen at 2:25 p.m. and seized the town at 3:50 p.m., capturing the battalion commander in charge of its defense and taking between 700 and 800 prisoners.

CC B elements in the vicinity of Altenberg received heavy artillery fire from the Urfahr area during the afternoon. The 41st Cavalry set up defense perimeter roadblock installations around Gallneukirchen. The command assembled in the Altenberg-Gallneukirchen area by 9:15 p.m. Several hundred additional German soldiers drifted into the towns occupied by the command and were taken prisoner.

The 183rd Field Artillery Group and Division Artillery remained in place during the morning while CC A clearing operations progressed. The 945th Field Artillery Battalion went forward into position to fire the first medium caliber volley on the city of Gramstetten at 11:55 a.m. When the Rottenegg-Gramstetten road was opened all battalions were echeloned forward into final positions during the afternoon. Heavy artillery of the 410th Field Artillery Group did not arrive in positions until late in the afternoon, delayed due to inability to get critical equipment over secondary roads. By 6:00 p.m. the coordinated force of seven light, medium, and heavy battalions was being directed on targets in the Urfahr-Linz area. The fires continued throughout the night.

A one-squadron armed reconnaissance was flown for the Division East of Urfahr by XIX Tactical Air Command about 10:35 p.m. From this operation a negative report was made. Kept away during the afternoon from the Urfahr-Linz area by heavy AA fire, fighter-bombers nevertheless assisted the CC A attack by bombing and strafing missions in the vicinity of Lichtenberg. A report of a concentration of 30 enemy tanks Northeast of Gallneukirchen was made about 4:00 p.m. but further missions for this profitable target were not available.

CC R crossed the newly constructed Bailey bridge East of Neufelden at 7:00 a.m. and advanced along the road to Dunzendorf without incident. Turning North to St. Johann the command again turned East on CC B's route but was delayed for several hours due to spot road failure. Advance elements reached Zwettl at 2:50 p.m. and immediately began relief of CC B elements. Thirty-two



prisoners of war were captured during the day's operation. Division Troops moved forward from Neufelden to Ober Neukirchen, following CC R. The 56th Engineers initiated bridge work on the main road to Urfahr in the Rottegg locality. One enemy aircraft was probably destroyed by the 575th Anti-Aircraft Battalion during the day.

RUSSIAN SPEAKING PATROLS

At 7:15 p.m. CC B was directed to hold the bulk of its forces in the vicinity of Gallneukirchen and push strong patrols Southeast and East, approximately 20 kilometers, in an attempt to make contact with the Russian Army. Russian speaking liaison officers were sent to accompany the patrols.

From observations the following day it was indicated that the enemy apparently had abandoned hope of holding the Urfahr-Linz area and had withdrawn what elements could be motorized to the East during the night. At least four batteries of permanently installed 88mm and 90mm anti-aircraft guns, part of the Herman Goerring Tank Works, and other industrial plant protective system, together with numerous other AA warning devices, were completely destroyed in place.

Preceded by cavalry reconnaissance CC A commenced its move to the North and East from Gramstetten at 6:45 p.m. May 5. At 7:05 a.m. a civilian police emissary arrived at the Task Force Hearn command post in Walding and indicated that most of the German defense forces had left Linz and the bridge across the Danube was intact, offering to surrender the city again.

Apparently no action was taken on this offer as the command was then already on the move. Advance elements reached Hellinonsodt at 7:25 a.m. continuing to Swarzen-dorf by 9:15 a.m. Preceded by elements of Task Force Wingard the column continued South and reached the high ground overlooking Linz at 10:00 a.m.

Orders were issued by Division for the command to enter and seize Urfahr. Should the bridge across the Danube be found intact, the command, accompanied by local officials, was directed to continue across the bridge into Linz and secure the bridge at all costs. Task Force Wingard had entered Urfahr by 11:00 a.m. and started across the Danube without difficulty. Closing in the center of Linz at 11:30 a.m., the terms of surrender preferred to Division Artillery earlier in the morning were confirmed by city officials and accepted by the command general of CC A. Engineers removed 2,000 pounds of explosives from under the highway and railroad bridges. During the afternoon 153 enemy soldiers surrendered to Task Force Wingard within the city. The bulk of CC A assembled in the Reichenau-Hellinonsodt area, the command post being established in the latter.

Heavy artillery fire concentrations were targeted on Urfahr until 10:00 a.m. when fire was lifted on Division order. At least 40 missions involving an expenditure of 2,118 rounds of light, medium, and heavy artillery were directed at military targets in and around the city. At 9:05 a.m. an emissary representing the city of Linz turned up at the Division Artillery command post with a proposal to surrender Linz and all troops in the area. This proposal was reported to Division Headquarters by radio. No action was taken as there were no means of determining the authenticity of the offer and action toward seizure of the locality North of the Danube was too far advanced to interrupt.

The 183rd Field Artillery Group commenced movement to the Hellinonsodt area during the afternoon to resume its CC A support role. Division Artillery moved to the Gallneukirchen area, closing at 7:30 p.m., and resumed its CC B support mission. The 410th Field Artillery Group remained in place, reverting to its normal Corps reinforcing mission. The 328th Combat Team moved into and occupied the Urfahr-Linz area at 6:00 p.m., relieving Task Force Wingard.

Two patrols were sent from the 41st Cavalry of CC B, Southeast and East from Gallneukirchen area in the morning. Troop B, 41st Cavalry, the patrol operating to the East, reached Pragarten on the international boundary at 9:30 a.m. Trailing elements of a retreating enemy column were encountered and six light tanks, and an anti-craft vehicle were destroyed and several hundred prisoners taken. Resuming the advance to the East the patrol reached Zell at 1:45 p.m. against light resistance. Two enemy tanks and four general purpose vehicles were destroyed and additional prisoners taken.

THE MAUTHAUSEN CONCENTRATION CAMP

Troop A, 41st Cavalry, the patrol operating to the Southeast, reached Katzdorf at 8:30 a.m. Here the patrol was delayed by enemy artillery fire and found the railroad was still in operation through this point. A platoon of Troop D, 41st Cavalry, was sent South to investigate an enemy strong point near Mauthausen. Despite heavy mortar fire the patrol uncovered the Mauthausen Concentration Camp which contained approximately 20,000 slave labor inmates comprised of sixteen separate nationalities. Also discovered was the nearby Gusen Concentration Camp but the approximately equal number of able-bodied inmates had already broken out on the arrival of Cavalry troops.

In this locality some 1,000 German prison guards were rounded up and taken back to Gallneukirchen as prisoners. The 41st Cavalry Troops continued East and bypassed an enemy position defended with mortars, small arms, and panzerfaust, three kilometers Southeast of Reid. The patrol was split into two groups which crossed the international boundary and advanced parallel to each other along the



MAUTHAUSEN CONCENTRATION CAMP. *Liberated prisoners in the Mauthausen concentration camp near Linz, Austria, give rousing welcome to Cavalrymen of the Division. The banner across the wall was made by Spanish Loyalist prisoners who fought against Fascism since 1936*

North bank of the Danube to Baumbartenberg without opposition. The patrol reached the vicinity of Klam and Saxon at 8:00 p.m. where they assembled for the night. The bulk of CC B assembled in the Gallneukirchen area during the day, where the command post was established. The 705th Tank Destroyer Battalion left Ober Neukirchen at 5:00 a.m., May 5, and proceeded to the vicinity of Kirchschlag where an enemy radio transmission installation was seized against some opposition, 26 prisoners taken, four killed, and the area cleared by 6:15 a.m. The 56th Engineer Battalion completed construction of the Bailey bridge at Rottenegg and made plans for filling four additional craters discovered along the main road between Rottenegg and Urfahr.

CC R maintained roadblocks in the vicinity of Zwettl throughout the day. A patrol sent along the main road as far North as Leonfelden liberated 62 Allied prisoners of war.

The 26th and 5th Infantry Divisions made good gains in the XII Corps zone during the early part of the day.

Corps Operational Directive No. 115 was received at 9:45 a.m. outlining the plan for an advance to the North on Prague. The 5th Infantry Division was to cover the debouchment of the 4th Armored Division North of the Czechoslovakian border through the Freyung Pass. The 90th Infantry Division to the West was to initiate an advance on Prague through the Regen pass. The 26th Infantry Division on the East was to protect the Corps Northeast flank between the 5th Infantry Division and the 11th Armored Division.

One combat team of the 26th Division was directed to continue attempts to contact the Russian Army and protect the Corps East flank from Linz, North to the Czecho-

slovakian border. The 183rd Field Artillery Group was directed to reinforce fires for the 26th Infantry Division. The only crossing of the Danube River on May 5 between Passau, then in the hands of the United States and the Russian Army to the West of Vienna, was the large steel and concrete structure between Urfahr and Linz. When the Thunderbolts seized this bridge about mid-day all German forces in Czechoslovakia were cut off from possible Southward withdrawal to the alleged National Redoubt Area in Southern Bavaria. The liberation of the Concentration camps at Mauthausen and Gusne broke the Nazi hold on two mass starvation and murder plants that, in five years, had witnessed undesirably bestial torture and the scientific elimination of hundreds of thousands of enslaved human beings.

RUMORS OF THE END

At this time rumors of the War's end started coming through, which was easily understandable considering the position of the Division. This was also confirmed as a likely possibility as moves towards the mass capitulation of several major German Army elements occurred during the day. Hopes of contacting the Russian Army North of the Danube were dismissed by an OSS operations report that the Russians had turned Northwest towards Budweis, Czecho-slovakia, some 69 kilometers East of Linz.

In an attempt to make a Russian Army contact CC A sent a patrol Northeast on May 6 which reached Reichenthal at 11:45 a.m. without opposition. In the vicinity of Summerau 100 prisoners were taken and 16 105mm howitzers, five 120mm mortars, and three nebelwerfers were captured. Continuing to the Northeast, 10 kilometers inside Russian territory, the patrol reached the Czech border at Mairspindt about 5:00 p.m. No contact was reported and the force countermarched to the Reichguaser. The bulk of the command remained in place near Hell Ousodt. A total of 500 prisoners were taken in the commands zone during the day.

CC B's 41st Cavalry patrols proceeded to a depth of 30 kilometers inside Russian territory without making contact during the day. Troop B, 41st Cavalry, continued Northeast to Konigswiesen by 9:50 a.m., where enemy resistance in mountainous wooded terrain blocked further advance. Later in the day when the enemy forces withdrew this patrol continued Northeast as far as Horzen-schlag. This Troop A, was to fire the last shot in the war for the Division at 5:00 p.m.

Troop A, 41st Cavalry, which had advanced as far as Saxen the afternoon before, established an OP on the North bank of the Danube River during the day and continued to the East as far as Grein. Some 4,000 self-disarmed enemy troops marched into Gallneukirchen during the day and were concentrated in a large open field to the West, along with the thousands of prisoners taken the previous day.



Men and tanks fire on town of Keppel, Austria

Elements of XX Corps' 65th Infantry Division relieved the 328th Combat Team of occupation duties in Linz at 11:00 a.m. on May 6. The combat team, minus one team, then marched North from Urfahr at noon and passed from Division control in mid-afternoon. One battalion of the 328th Infantry stayed to occupy Urfahr and encountered considerable difficulty in handling the thousands of liberated concentration camp inmates from Gusen who had come into the area in search of food.

CC R continued roadblock and patrol activity in the Zwettl area without incident.

Division Artillery liaison planes which were active on aerial reconnaissance during the day reported the absence of Russian troops as far as 12 kilometers East of Amstetten. A general movement of German forces to the East between Enns and Amstetten was reported about mid-day, also that the main East-West highway bridge at Enns was intact. Later in the day an aerial patrol was unable to locate Russian forces as far as 25 kilometers East of Amstetten. Representatives of a White Russian Corps, reputedly some 100,000 strong, presented themselves at the Division command post during the day and indicated willingness to surrender if their command could be moved from the general area of Budweis in Czechoslovakia Southwest through the U. S. Army lines and also provided that they would not be turned over to the Red Russian Army later. The emissaries were returned to their commander on instructions from XII Corps with a tentative route of movement, disarmament, and assembly area, and a 36-hour period in which to accept unconditional surrender terms only.

The 41st Cavalry patrols advanced to Hoezeuschlag and Grein during the day placed Division elements some 30 kilometers further East than any other Allied unit was to advance in Europe during the war.

At 9:45 a.m., May 7, the Division was notified by telephone message that World War II in the European Theater would officially terminate at 1:00 a.m., May 9. The Division was ordered to cease all offensive operations and withdraw patrols to the International Boundary between the United States and Russian Armies. They were however, directed to maintain local security measures.

FREISTADT SURRENDERS

During the morning CC A sent a patrol Northeast from Reichenau which crossed the International Boundary at Schwandt, whereupon they found the town of Freistadt occupied by outnumbering German troops and negotiated for surrender of the town before entering. The surrender proposal was accepted and the patrol entered the town at 11:00 a.m., taking 289 prisoners of war.

CC B reattempted to restore the Mauthausen Concentration Camp to an operating basis during the day. Food was sought from higher headquarters as well as local sources. Plans for the burial of some 500 bodies, stacked like cordwood in the camp hospital area, were made. Partial order was resumed in the camp after the many racial groups were segregated, leaders and proportionate quarters assigned, and miscellaneous weapons and ammunition collected. An additional 450 prisoners were rounded up West of the International Boundary and concentrated in the Gallneukirchen area. To prevent further infiltration of German troops into the United States Army lines defensive roadblocks were established along the International Army boundary.

Division service elements assembly in the Urfahr area was completed with the arrival of Train Headquarters at noon. Representatives of various large German units made contacts with the Division during the day of May 8, for the express purpose of surrender. A general Officer Emissary from the Vlassov White Russian Corps in Czechoslovakia



Elements of the Division occupy the square of Linz, Austria



returned expressing willingness to accept unconditional surrender to the allies as a whole. Emissaries from the German 2nd SS Panzer Corps, disposed opposite the Russian Army West of Vienna and North of the Danube River, sought to surrender some 50,000 troops under its jurisdiction. General Officer representatives of the German Eighth Army, disposed opposite the Russian Army West of Vienna and South of the Danube River, also expressed a wish to surrender some 100,000 troops to the United States Army. All such commands were directed to remain in place pending Shaeff instructions regarding the general surrender of all German forces.

CONTACT WITH THE RUSSIAN ARMY

CC B sent Troop A, 41st Cavalry, on patrol to the East, South of the Danube River. Advancing gingerly through 30 kilometers of vastly outnumbering German troops moving Westward, and undaunted by concentrations of Russian Artillery fire following on the Enns-Amstetten highway, the patrol finally made contact with the Russian Army late that afternoon. This completed accomplishment of all assigned Division missions. The historic meeting took place with the Russian 7th Parachute Guards Division in Amstetten, Austria, at 3:50 p.m. Such a contact, the first made with the Russian Army South of Czechoslovakia, aptly climaxed the weeks of grueling efforts to deal the German Army a mortal blow.

Major units were engaged throughout the day in attempting to control and handle the thousands of individuals and small groups of German soldiers who turned in voluntarily and were made prisoner. Before midnight an estimated 12,451 prisoners of war were taken into Division custody. The conclusion of the war found Thunderbolt's elements, the Easternmost Allied unit in the European Theater, busily engaged in trying to block and segregate the individually capitulating mass of German Wehrmacht, determined not to become Russian prisoners. Several days later the Thunderbolts were to turn back to the Russian Army 34,125 prisoners of war who made their way, indi-



Men prepare to go boating on the Danube River at Linz, Austria

vidually and in small groups, cross country into the Division area at the end of hostilities.

We find during the period from April 1, to May 8, 1945, a startling comparison in casualties. Enemy personnel totalled 58,287, of which 2,755 were killed and wounded, 53,174 prisoners taken, and 2,358 hospital personnel overrun. Our own amounted to 378, of which 70 were killed, 301 wounded in action and seven missing.

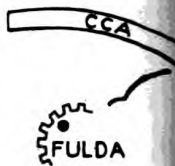
The enemy lost 32 Mark III, IV, V, VI tanks, ten half-tracks, 22 AA Artillery (20 to 40mm), 154 Artillery pieces (75mm plus), 860 GP Vehicles and 31 aircraft, totalling 1,109 vehicle and weapons casualties. Our own totalled 243 vehicles and weapons. Innumerable small arms, miscellaneous light vehicles, and other enemy material destroyed are not listed. The staggering total of destroyed enemy combat and transport vehicles, as well as artillery and airplanes, were permanent losses to the Wehrmacht. Our own material, replaced or repaired, multiplied the advantage in mobility and protection as time passed.

Other noteworthy results of the Thunderbolts actions through Germany and Austria was the liberation of 5,012 Allied Prisoners of War and 52,500 Nazi slave laborers, totaling 57,512. Also the seizure of supplies and production facilities, such as the Thuringia Small Arms Manufacturing Center, the electronics research laboratory near Unter Steinach, Kulmbach Quartermaster Depot, the Grafenwohr General Service Depot and the Linz Industrial area.

THE SHOOTING WAR STOPS

When the shooting war stopped on May 9, 1945, the 11th Armored Division had proven itself as a battle-proven unit. It made a combat record for itself surpassed by none.

The Thunderbolts share in the victory was a huge one.



ACTION

945

Prior to 1 April

The swift slashing PALATINATE cleanup tanks had crossed the remnants of Nazi Division offering resistance consisting of S/A and mortar fire in

1 April

No coordinated defense as our rapid exploitation port completely routed arty and mortar were in

2 April

Nebelwerfer Regt Nide Enemy air, S/A, panzer, 6 rds nebelwerfer fire w/ substituted resistance. Elements TENWESTHEIM and 1. Captured German hospital at GRIMMENTHAL.

3 April

PWs from miscellaneous. Originally heavy (nebelwerfer, mortar, S/A and mortar fire. Tag With the capture of Uld German prison containing criminal prisoners

4 April

Nazi Party and city our entrance into that hastily organized Volks stormy defended with mortar fire made up the defense

5 April

Strafing by enemy air, mortar and arty fire, captured material included Volksturm weapons and one AA factory while last year, 500 carbines, 2 pistols, 5,000 parts for taken from fifty-three

6 April

Little enemy activity as they defended their 1 ME 110, 8 FW 100's, FW 190's, 5 ME 109's, 4th and 6th Hungarian Hungarian regimental

7 April

Tanks, arty, blown and mortar fire. Twenty were represented in the

8 April

15 rds 150mm arty, 8 rds 105mm, also some heavy mortar fire, 467 T. PWs from 5th Pz (Hungarian).

9 April

Enemy patrols either our troops.

10 April

Resistance increased on axis. Splendid air support coming the enemy's resistance. PWs from 17th Bn, and seventeen miscellaneous

1 April

Negotiated the capture of 0308. PWs from 12th Verfer Regt (OHQ) and

2 April

Resistance light. No re reported. PWs from 1st Bn.

3 April

S/A, panzerfaust, snipers captured intact at two days produced 1st Bn, and 21 miscellaneous

4 April

Resistance light, disorganized by 6 FW 190's. 2 PWs from 3 miscellaneous units.

1 April to 10 April

No contact.

MOORED DIVISION

TABOR

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

BUDWEIS

XXXX
EIGHTH

XXXX
WHITE
RUSSIAN

4
FREISTADT

5
ZWETTL

CCB
PIERBACH

CCB
GALLNEUKIRCHEN

CCB
KLAUS

CCB
THAUSEN

CCB
AMSTETTEN

OCCUPATION - DEACTIVATION

By

**Colonel
HILL BLALOCK**





AY 9, 1945, found the Thunderbolts with yet a considerable job to be done. Peace came not with great revelry to the war-weary men of the 11th Armored Division. The day of concord had been too long foreseen, and the knowledge of the exhausting mopping-up duty ahead quelled any cheering or celebration.

CC A felt the thrill of conquest when, on entering Linz, Austria, it rumbled along on flower-strewn streets lined on either side with joyous throngs of cheering Austrians and liberated slave workers of many nations. CC B found its sensation in the meeting with the Red Army.

CC R and CC A moved North of the Danube to the heights overlooking Linz. Ahead of them the remnants of the Wehrmacht crowded by the thousands into the neutral zone between the brooding, silent guns of the United States and Russian forces. The Allied Command had agreed that all German troops East of the U. S. lines were to be considered prisoners of war of the Red Army. The Germans, however, preferred the American zone and in order to prevent their sneaking into the American zone CC A and CC R were committed in patrols and outposts. Finally it was necessary to herd them at gunpoint into the vicinity of Freyung where they were delivered to the Russians. Long columns of German troops, guarded by tanks, flowed for hours into the fields around Freyung and the delivery was eventually accomplished without mishap.

CC B meantime was working in the nauseating filth and degradation of the Mauthausen and Gusen concentration camps. These filthy holes, emanating wretched human misery and rank with the stench of death, were thrown open to the cleansing air. The dead littering the grounds were buried and the wretched inmates who had miraculously escaped the slaughter were given medical care, food and clothing. Nurses of the 66th Field Hospital worked along side CC B, tending the half-dead creatures too weak and helpless to move out of their own excrement. What joy this triumphant fighting unit had felt turned rapidly to violent hatred at the sight of the inhuman attempt at mass obliteration. Despite all however, the task was completed with customary Division thoroughness.

On completion of these jobs came the Division's last move before rolling piece-meal back to Lanf to stack arms for the last time. The Thunderbolts were relieved in and around Linz about June 4, 1945, by the 65th Infantry Division and the Russians moved into the Division sector North of the Danube. Division Headquarters was established in the beautiful resort of Gmunden on the shores of the lovely Gmunden Sea. CC B climbed into a town at the foothills of the Alps and CC R into a nearby area. CC A headquarters were established at Styr and the unit

found itself sharing border duties with the Russians along the Innes River.

Once closed in the new area the 11th Armored Division began the final phase of its occupational work. Division Trains continued maintenance and supply while the line troops plunged into a variety of tasks, the most complex of which was the handling of displaced persons. There were several D.P. camps in the Division area, the task of feeding and caring for the liberated inmates as well as transporting them to their homelands was by no means a light one.

Many Division men received the interesting, but not often easy or pleasant, detail of escorting DP's to various points inside the Russian occupied zone. This job was complicated by the refusal of many of these hopeless and homeless persons to return to villages ravaged by war. At least one man is known to have returned to the Division area five weeks after being delivered miles inside the Russian sector.

Another monotonous and seemingly endless task that fell to the Division was that of screening and discharging countless PW's, whose care was a serious drain on the meager supplies of food. Additional prisoners entered the camps almost daily as Division patrols scouring the area rounded them up. One group, around 15,000 SS troops, was returned to Germany, where their organization was later branded criminal at the Nuremberg War Trials.

The II Corps commander, Lieutenant General Geoffrey Keyes, inspected the SS camp at Steyr, which was supervised by the 42nd Tank Battalion. The tankers had the general's inspection route lined with SS troops in platoon formation and stripped to the waist for uniformity. The sight of those still sturdy men was additional proof of the valor and skill of the American soldiers who had reduced a once mighty war machine to a group of half-naked prisoners.

Probably the most exciting job in the Division during its stay in Austria was that of ferreting out Nazi die-hards who had taken refuge in the mountains. A glance at the map or just out of the CP window told the units assigned this mission that it was no job for armored vehicles. So the organized provisional Horse Cavalry platoons with captured mounts. Mounted platoons then combed the mountains in three day forays, like Pershing chasing Pancho Villa on a smaller scale.

And while something new was added to the Division T/O, something was also added to the armored cowboys when saddle sores replaced flat tires and broken tracks as an occupational disease. Actually, few fanatic hold-outs were captured, but some souvenir weapons were located and the hunt relieved the monotony of more routine duties.

All during its Austrian occupation the Division had excellent relations with the adjacent Russian unit, a Paratroop



Guards Division. Several parties as well as a few shots across the river were exchanged, with the parties being generally the more dangerous of the two gestures. Relations were so well cemented that the Russians, notoriously cold toward making concessions, were prevailed upon by CC A to withdraw from the Innes River to the eastern limit of Kreis Steyr so that the Kreis, as a geographical and political unit, could be administered by only one occupying power. This concession was especially pleasing to CC A troops because it reduced the number of border posts and opened for exploration that part of the town of Steyr east of the river.

With all the many jobs that had to be done for the proper supervision of the area, Division troops still found plenty of time for their own pleasure. Clubs sprang up in every village where troops were billeted. They provided cheerful gathering places for good fellowship with plenty of beer, even though it had to be ordered in a strictly non-committed voice to avoid fraternizing with the waitresses. Everyone will recall in his own fashion the burden of non-fraternization, but one of the best replies to an infraction of the rule was made by a doughboy of the 63rd A.I.B. When caught red-handed out horseback riding with a fraulein, he answered the general's query with, "What girl, sir?"

The troops situated near Gmunden were especially fortunate to have the beautiful Gmunden Sea as an added attraction, near 70 miles in circumference, its blue waters, sunk among the majestic mountains, were churned daily by Division men in all kinds of craft escaping the more hum-drum life ashore.

Gmunden was also the scene of many intra-division and inter-division sports events. The Division boxing matches clearly showed that the war had not taken all the fight out of 11th Armored Division men.

The Division baseball team, although handicapped in players by the wide dispersion of units, made a creditable showing in the Corps league. This was partly due to the excellent side-line support given by Division men from all units who trucked for miles to cheer the team.

There were several tennis courts throughout the area and two Division men took part in the Corps tennis tournament, with resulting success to themselves and the Division. Even ping-pong came into the organized limelight. The men of Special Services went all out to provide a wealth and variety of entertainment and recreation. In addition to organizing athletic events and tournaments, they supplied a great quantity of sport and games equipment, distributed movies, and booked that overseas phenomenon, the USO show, which always packed 'em in. Special Services also arranged for Division men to par-

ticipate in the theater tours to Paris, the Riviera, and other places where rank meant nothing and a man could seek his pleasure with complete abandon.

With all those methods of relaxation and many others not here listed, it is probable that every Division soldier will acclaim the Austrian occupation as a very pleasant interlude. But since all pleasures have to be earned, in every town where the Thunderbolts billeted, they were found, during normal duty hours, soberly performing their various occupation tasks and trying to clean the dirt of five countries off themselves and their equipment. After starting its work in the new area, the Division finally had a chance to look in the mirror. What it saw was be-whiskered faces, dirty clothes and scarred vehicles. But in a surprising short time, the whiskers disappeared, the clothes were cleaned, and the vehicles were washed and painted. The old bogie, Saturday inspection, returned and the Division returned to parade ground condition.

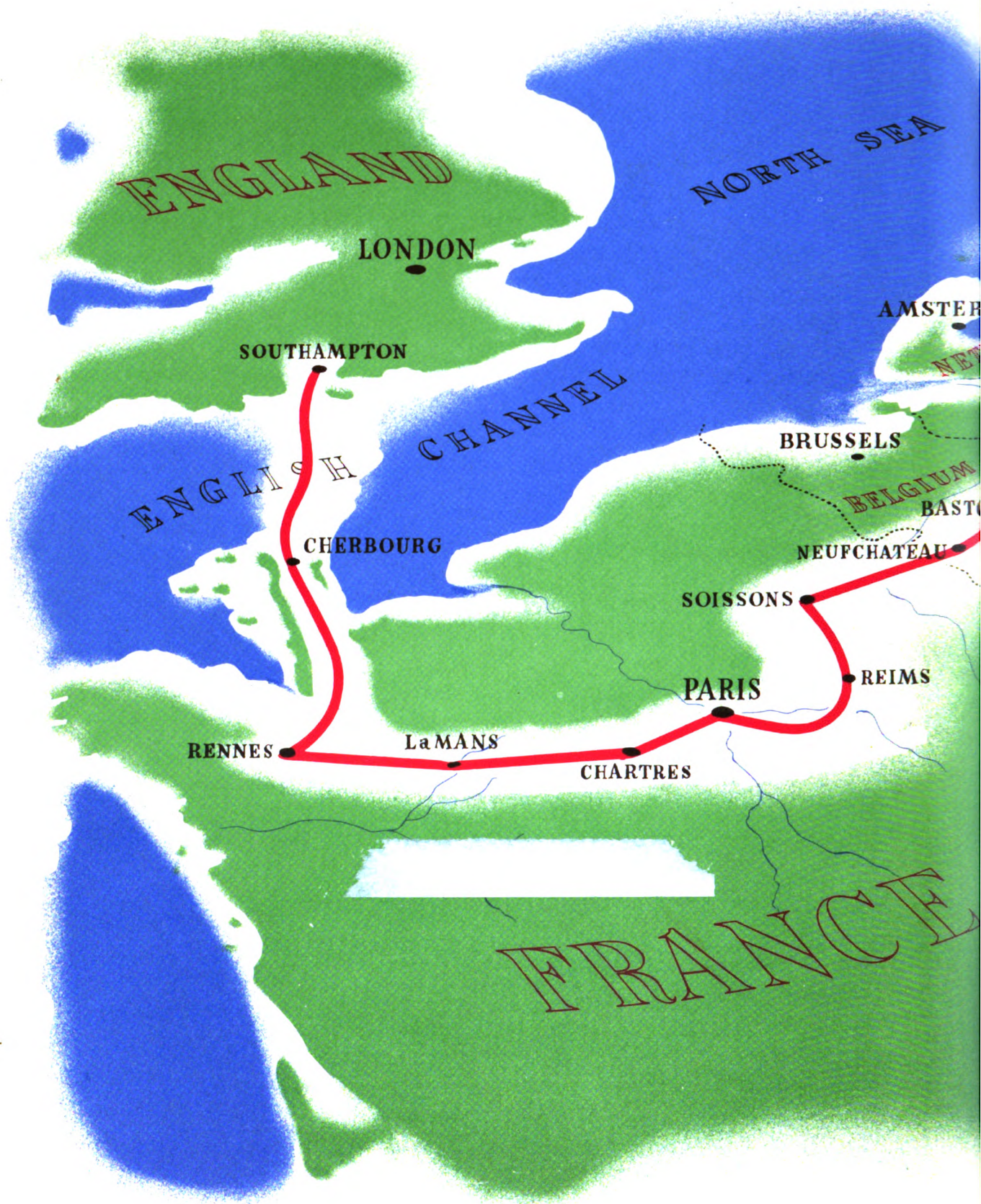
The policing was not only for men and vehicles, but for the area also—including the hauling away to salvage dumps of a great quantity of abandoned Wehrmacht vehicles that littered the roads. So rapidly was the policing accomplished that within a month after the Division's arrival in Austria, the only signs that the men of the area had been through a war were a few damaged buildings, the campaign ribbons on men's shirts, and that extra swagger in men's walk that comes natural to a good combat unit. The occupation duties and the recreational facilities provided a pleasant balance of work and play that sped the time toward the great journey home. Officers and men started leaving the Division shortly after it arrived in Austria—the majority to go to other units in the ETO, some few to go home, and fewer to go to the Pacific. Most of those still in the Theater managed to get back for the final celebration of Division Activation Day, August 15, 1945. Even men who had left the Division prior to its departure from the States returned on that day to salute the Thunderbolt.

After the celebration men and equipment flowed away with increasing speed. Deactivation was approaching. Unit after unit closed out, while vehicles rumbled off to Lauf, Germany, for final turn-in. An Infantry Division relieved the 11th Armored Division of its occupational duties in September, 1945, and by September 30, all that was left of the Thunderbolt was a patch on a soldier's sleeve.

That was all that showed. What didn't show was a path of glory, seared with blood and iron across the face of Europe, and a pride of accomplishment and a fellowship of spirit that will live forever in the hearts of men of the Thunderbolt—the 11th Armored Division.

End

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